

**The Existential Sentence
in
Modern Hebrew**

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1.0 Introduction

Much has been written about existential sentences (ES) but little about ES in Modern Hebrew (MH). In this essay I will explore expletive subjects in MH and the form of the MH ES.¹

MH has two expletives: *yes* and *ze*. *Yes* is a particle and is generally translated into English as “there is” or “there are”. It can also be used to show possession and, in a very specific context, to form a modal sentence asserting the necessity of some action. I will attempt to show that, despite any apparent disparities between the structures of the existential, possessive, and modal sentences, the particle functions similarly in all three constructions and has unique properties that it exhibits throughout its usages.

Ze is often used as the third person neuter pronoun, but it also functions often as an expletive. Some authors have argued that *ze*, even in sentences which appear to be existential, is not an expletive but a referential pronoun. I will argue that MH, as a partial *pro*-drop language, has an optional-expletive rule (as opposed to the expected null expletive rule for languages that allow full *pro*-drop), and that the fact that *ze* is often null in instances which appear to be non-referential offers further proof that it is expletive in nature.²

¹ This paper would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Professor Dianne Jonas, who has read, re-read, and edited several drafts. Her suggestions have been invaluable and her good cheer made the research and writing processes a pleasure. Any remaining mistakes are my own.

² Borer (1984) analyzes MH as a partial *pro*-drop language. Many of the conclusions I will draw will be heavily based in her work.

2.0 Overview of the Existential Sentence

In this section I will give an overview of the structure and function of ES as well as some basic examples of the pertinent phenomena in both English and MH. Following Milsark (1974) I will deal almost exclusively with the *there* expletive in English and the particle *yes* in MH. The *it* expletive and its rough MH equivalent *ze* will be addressed later on in section 4.

2.1 The Existential Sentence in English

The purpose of the existential sentence (ES) is to assert the existence of an entity. In English, the defining element of ES is taken to be the presence in subject position of a specific instantiation of the word *there*.^{3,4} This instance of *there* is restricted to subject position.⁵ In addition, *there* in this context can occur only with the verb *be* or with “a class of intransitive verbs whose characteristics are very hard to specify.”⁶ This expletive *there* that appears in ES seems to be “very nearly empty semantically”⁷ and can be phonologically reduced.⁸

³ As stated in the introduction to this sentence, I follow Milsark (1974) in treating the *there* existential as the basic form of ES and will discuss the *it* existential later as a separate matter.

⁴ Milsark (1974:9) writes, “I shall at the outset reserve the term existential sentence (abbreviated ES) to designate all and only those English sentences in which there appears an occurrence of the unstressed, non-deictic, “existential” there.” On page 14 he gives seven basic permutations of ES and adds, “All [examples]...are characterized by the appearance in subject position of a special formative there. This is of course a matter of definition, since the presence of this formative was taken in the preliminaries to be the defining property of ES in English.”

⁵ Milsark (1974:15) gives the following examples:

- (i) (a)*I want there.
- (b)*I gave there some consideration.
- (c) I { *forced/ want } there to be a riot.

⁶ Milsark (1974:16) gives the following three sentences, each with a different verb that signifies roughly “commenced”, two of which are grammatical but the third of which is ungrammatical. It is difficult to distinguish semantically between those predicates that can or cannot appear in ES.

- (ii) (a)There arose a riot
- (b) There began a riot
- (c) *There started a riot

⁷ Milsark (1974:17). Expletive *there* is referred to, by Milsark and others, as unstressed and non-deictic. Milsark(1974:26) writes, “All that is being claimed in calling there semantically empty is that it is

Expletive *there* is generally taken to be linked to an NP that follows the verb. An example is given in (1). In more recent accounts the post-verbal NP is termed the associate of the expletive.

- (1) There is a dog in the yard.

The expletive *there* is linked to the NP *a dog* in sentence (1), which can be restated as sentence (2).

- (2) A dog is in the yard.

The verb agrees in number with the post-verbal NP.

Fundamentally, the expletive is non-referential, meaning that it does not refer to any entity in the discourse but acts only as a placeholder. For most ES the version with *there* and the version without *there* tend to have roughly the same meaning. Examples are given in (3) and (4)

- (3) (a) There are a lot of silly things being said here.
 (b) A lot of silly things are being said here.
- (4) (a) There is a large group of Linguistics majors graduating Yale this year.

impossible to say what there means in the same way that the meaning of, e.g., book can be specified; one could not, for instance, look there up in a dictionary and expect to learn anything⁸.

⁸ For example, the sentences in (iii) can be reduced in fast speech to sound something like those in (iv).

- (iii) (a) There is something weird here.
 (b) There's a fire.
- (iv) (a) Something weird here.
 (b) s'a fire.

Contractions with the verb *be* are always possible and the expletive is never stressed.

The phenomenon is observable in other languages as well, including French, as in sentences (v.a-b).

- (v) (a) Il y a quelqu'un a la porte.
 he there have someone at the door
 'There is someone at the door.'
- (b) Y a quelqu'un a la porte.
 there have someone at the door
 'There is someone at the door.'

(b) A large group of Linguistics majors is graduating Yale this year.

However, for many ES sentences the non-existential version is not quite equivalent. For the sentences in (5) and (6) the meanings of the ES and the non-ES diverge slightly:

(5) (a) There is a big spot of ketchup on your tie.

(b) A big spot of ketchup is on your tie.

(6) (a) There is a porcupine in the closet.

(b) A porcupine is in the closet.

One would probably use the ES version of (5) or (6) (i.e. (5a) or (6a)) in conversation to point out the presence of a big spot of ketchup on a person's tie or the presence of a porcupine in a closet. The ES version of this type of sentence asserts the existence of something unusual or unexpected. The non-ES sentences do not have quite the same force.

For some ES the distinction between the ES version and the non-ES version of the sentence is even more dramatic.

(7) (a) There is a Man-On-The-Moon

(b) A man is on the moon

(8) (a) There is a God in heaven.

(b) A god is in heaven.

For others, no non-ES version seems possible:

(9) (a) There is an odd smell in that room.

(b) *An odd smell is in that room.

Milsark 1974 discusses permutations such as these in great detail. While a careful discussion of his arguments is beyond the scope of this paper, several of his conclusions will become relevant to the present discussion. In particular he identifies the Definiteness Restriction, referred to in more recent literature as the Definiteness Effect (DE), which may account for the phenomenon observed in sentences in examples (7) and (8) above.⁹ Milsark examines the distinction between the following two sentences, observing that they differ slightly in their logical implications:

(10) (a) Many unicorns exist.¹⁰

(b) There are many unicorns.

Milsark points out that (10a) is ambiguous, meaning either:

A. Particular unicorns do exist but other particular unicorns do not.

or

B. A large number of unicorns are extant.

(10b) does not share this ambiguity, having as its only possible interpretation the statement in (B) above. From this information Milsark draws the conclusion that, though the word *exist* in itself can signify either the existence of individual entities or the existence of a class of entities, the operation performed by ES is exclusively that of asserting the existence of a class.¹¹ This phenomenon is connected with the DE mentioned above: an existential sentence can assert the existence of a class of entities but cannot refer to an individual entity. It makes sense, then, that definite NP are, for the most part, excluded from post-verbal position in ES (although they may felicitously

⁹ The term 'Definiteness Effect' comes from Milsark (1974:18).

¹⁰ Milsark (1974:181)

¹¹ As stated above, Milsark goes into much greater detail on this topic than can be discussed here. See chapter 6 of Milsark (1974) for the entire discussion.

appear as the subjects of the non-ES versions of the same sentences, as shown in sentence (11c):

- (11) (a) There is a dog in the yard.
 (b) *There is John's dog in the yard
 (c) John's dog is in the yard.
- (12) (a) There is someone I'd like you to meet.
 (b) *There is John I'd like you to meet.
 (c) I'd like you to meet John.

The DE is not without exceptions. For example, observe sentence (13).

- (13) There's that cheese in the fridge. (no stress on *that*)

This sentence seems to have a definite NP [that cheese] as the associate of the expletive.

However, the sentence has a very different interpretation from (14).

- (14) That cheese is in the fridge.

Whereas (13) answers the question, "Is there anything to eat in the house?" (14) does not.

The purpose of (13) is existential in nature: the sentence asserts the existence of the cheese which is in the fridge and available for eating. The purpose of (14) is exclusively to locate the particular cheese in space.¹²

¹² Milsark (1974:209) would analyze the definite NP in (13) above as belonging to a hypothetical list of foods available to the person asking the question, "Is there anything to eat in the house?" He gives the sentence in (vi) as an example.

(vi) Is there anything worth seeing around here? Well, there's the Necco factory.

Milsark writes the following about sentence (vi):

As would be expected, the relaxation of the restriction is not confined to the special case of definites, but extends to universals and quantified NP in general...The most striking thing about the meaning of sentences like [(vi)] is the feeling they have of naming parts of a list. The NP [*the*

2.2 The copular verb in Modern Hebrew

ES in MH differ from English ES in that the expletive element in MH takes the form of a particle *yes*,¹³ which is sometimes also used to show possession in the present tense. Before exploring the nature of the MH ES it is important to understand the idiosyncrasies of two verbs in that language: *be* and *have*.

The copular verb in MH does not exist in the present tense. In simple declarative sentences in the present tense using the verb *be*, the verb form is omitted and the copula is understood, as shown in (15b) and (16b).

- (15) (a) hu haya moreh (Yechiel Schur, p.c.)
 he be-m./3s./past teacher
 'He was a teacher.'
- (b) hu moreh (Schur, p.c.)
 he teacher
 'He is a teacher.'
- (c) hu yihyeh moreh (Schur, p.c.)
 he be-m./3s./fut. teacher
 'He will be a teacher.'
- (d) Hillel hu moreh (Schur, p.c.)
 H. he teacher
 'Hillel is a teacher.'¹⁴

Necco factory] seem to be introduced as items in a larger list of entities, even if one does not go on to name the rest of them...

One could imagine that in such cases some principle allows the class predicate EXIST to take not the set denoted by the (quantified) NP as its argument, but rather a hypothetical set which is projected from the NP by taking the set actually denoted by NP as a member. This larger set would be the "list" which seems to be lurking in the background of the interpretation of sentences such as [(vi)]. One would then expect the quantificational structure of the NP to be irrelevant for the quantification restriction, since the NP, quantified or not, will merely denote a member of the set which is being predicated by EXIST.

¹³I follow Borer (1984) in calling *yes* a particle.

¹⁴I include (15d) above to show that in that sentence *Hillel*, a proper noun, is the subject, and the corresponding pronoun is repeated to show equivalency between the two nouns in the sentence, *Hillel* and *moreh*, "teacher", but the copula is still omitted since it cannot be inflected for present tense.

- (16) (a) Hillel haya ba-bayit. (Schur, p.c.)
 H. be-m./3s./past in-the-house
 'Hillel was at home.'
- (b) Hillel ba-bayit. (Schur, p.c.)
 H. in-the-house
 'Hillel is at home.'
- (c) Hillel yihyeh ba-bayit (be-od chamesh dakot) (Schur, p.c.)
 H. be-m./3s./fut. in-the-house (in-more five minutes)
 'Hillel will be at home (in another five minutes).'

Examples (15) and (16) demonstrate the omission of the copula from simple declarative sentences in the present tense.¹⁵ In possessive sentences this omission is ungrammatical, as shown in (17).

- (17) (a) haya lo chatul katan (Schur, p.c.)
 be-m./3s./past him-DAT cat small
 'He had a small cat.'
- (b) yihyeh lo chatul katan (Schur, p.c.)
 be-m./3s./fut. him-DAT cat small
 'He will have a small cat.'
- (c) *lo chatul katan (Schur, p.c.)
 him-DAT cat small

In possessive sentences in the present tense, rather than omit the copular verb, MH uses the uninflected particle *yes*. For past and future tenses the copula is used and is inflected for person, number, and gender, as we see in (18b-d).

- (18) (a) yes lo bayit ba-ir (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist him-DAT house in-the-city
 'He has a house in the city.'

¹⁵ The phonological absence of the copula in present tense copular sentences will become essential to a discussion below of potentially null-expletives in MH.

- (b) *haya lo bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-m./3s./past him-DAT house in-the-city
 'He had a house in the city.'
- (c) *yihyeh lo bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-m./3s./fut. him-DAT house in-the-city
 'He will have a house in the city.'
- (d) *hayu lo shlosa chatulim* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-m./3p./past him-DAT three cats
 'He had three cats.'

The particle *yes* is not negated in the same way as the copula, which is negated using the negative adverb *lo*. *Yes* has a separate, phonologically unrelated negative counterpart, *eyn*. Negative sentences are illustrated in (19)¹⁶.

- (19) (a) *yes la bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist her-DAT house in-the-city
 'She has a house in the city.'
- (b) *eyn la bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 neg. her-DAT house in-the-city
 'She does not have a house in the city.'
- (c) **lo yes la bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 not exist her-DAT house in-the-city
- (d) **yes lo la bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist not her-DAT house in-the-city
- (e) *haya la bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-m./3s./past her-DAT house in-the-city
 'She had a house in the city.'
- (f) *lo haya la bayit ba-ir* (Schur, p.c.)
 not be-m./3s./past her-DAT house in-the-city
 'She did not have a house in the city.'

Like *yes*, and unlike the copula, *eyn* is used only for the present tense and is not inflected in this usage for person, number, or gender.¹⁷

¹⁶ I follow Borer (1984) in glossing the particle *eyn* as *neg*.

A greater analysis of the relationship between *yes* (and *eyn*) and the copula would certainly be a worthwhile endeavor. However such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper and I will now move on to discuss some examples of MH ES.

2.3 The *yes* existential in MH

As stated above, present tense ES in MH use the particle *yes*, roughly equivalent to the verb *have*, rather than the verb *be*. This is not at all unusual among the world's languages. Though English uses the verb *be* in ES, as in the sentence in (20),

(20) There is a big rain cloud up ahead.

many other languages use the verb *have*, as in the French sentence in (21)

(21) Il y a un chat noir a la porte.
 he there have a cat black at the door
 'There is a black cat at the door.'

In MH, a typical ES in the present tense takes the form shown in (22).

(22) yes kelev ba-gan (Schur, p.c.)
 exist dog in-the-yard
 'There is a dog in the yard.'

The sentence has all the expected elements: the particle *yes*, an NP that functions as its associate and is indefinite, *kelev*, and a locative phrase *ba-gan*. The particle *yes* seems to be expletive, the part of the sentence that asserts the existence of the NP but that does not carry its own semantic value. Like other expletives, it can be phonologically reduced in fast speech:¹⁸

¹⁷ There is only one case in which the particles *yes* and *eyn* are inflected using a suffixed clitic which is marked for person, number and gender. This case will be discussed at length below in connection with partial *pro*-drop in the language and the arguments of Borer (1984).

¹⁸ This reduction is most obvious with the French example, since the French expletive [il y a] is a three-syllable phrase, whereas the English and MH expletives are one syllable each and their reduction is difficult

- (23) (a) There is a cat in the yard.
 (b) 'S a cat in the yard.
 (c) Il y a un chat dans le jardin (French)
 he there have a cat in the garden
 'There is a cat in the garden.'
 (d) Y a un chat dans le jardin (French)
 there have a cat in the garden
 'There is a cat in the garden.'
 (e) yes chatul ba-gan (MH) (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist cat in-the-garden
 'There is a cat in the garden.'
 (f) 's Chatul ba-gan (MH) (Schur, p.c.)
 -- cat in-the-garden
 'There is a cat in the garden.'

Negative ES in the present tense have the same form as positive, present-tense ES, but with the negative particle *eyn* in the place of *yes*:

- (24) (a) yes kelev ba-gan (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist dog in-the-yard
 'There is a dog in the yard.'
 (b) eyn kelev ba-gan (Schur, p.c.)
 neg. dog in-the-yard
 'There is not a dog in the yard.'

In the past and future tenses, the verb *be* is used in ES and it is negated with the negative adverb *lo* in negative ES. Neither *yes* nor *eyn* can be inflected to show past or future tense. Sentences (25c-d) show the impossibility of using *yes* to refer to past or future events. (25a) shows the appropriate usage for the past tense and (25b) for the future tense. The paradigm is repeated for *eyn* in the sentences in (26).

to capture on paper. The criterion that expletives may be phonologically reduced is widely accepted. See Ziv (1982:261-2).

- (25) (a) *haya kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-3s/m/past dog in-the-yard
 'There was a dog in the yard.'
- (b) *yihiyeh kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-3s/m/future dog in-the-yard
 'There will be a dog in the yard.'
- (c) **yes ba-avar kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 exist in-the-past dog in-the-yard
- (d) **yes ba-atid kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 exist in-the-future dog in-the-yard
- (26) (a) *lo haya kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 not be-3s/m/past dog in-the-yard
 'There was not a dog in the yard.'
- (b) *lo yihiyeh kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 not be-3s/m/future dog in-the-yard
 'There will not be a dog in the yard.'
- (c) **eyn ba-avar kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 neg. in-the-past dog in-the-yard
- (d) **eyn ba-atid kelev ba-gan* (Schur, p.c.)
 neg. in-the-future dog in-the-yard

ES should not be confused with possessive sentences in MH, which, like ES, use the particles *yes/eyn* in the present tense and the copula in the past and future tenses, as described above in section 2.2. Possessives are distinct from ES in that they must contain a possessor NP, which can be either a noun or a pronoun inflected for person, number and gender. For comparison, (27a) is a typical ES with a locative element that happens to imply possession and (27b) is a possessive sentence.

- (27) (a) *yes maftach ba-kis-o* (ES) (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist key in-the-pocket-(possessive)3s./m.
 'There is a key in his pocket.'

(b) *yes* lo maftach (possessive) (Schur, p.c.)
Exist him-DAT key
'He has a key.'

2.4 Conclusion

In this section I have introduced various characteristics of the particle *yes*, namely that it is an MH expletive also found in sentences asserting possession. I have also described the absence of the MH copula from all present tense sentences and the place that *yes* holds within the overall system of the copular verb. In the next section I will delve further into an analysis of *yes* and its distribution in various sentence types, including ES, possessives, and the modal.

3.0 The *there*-existential and the modal

In this section I will provide an analysis of the particle *yes* as performing in a predictable and unified way within various disparate types of sentences. These sentence types are ES, possessives, and the modal sentence. It seems apparent, after careful analysis of the effect that *yes* has on the NP that follow it in both ES and possessive sentences, that a unity of function exists among all of its instantiations. In section 3.5 I will propose a diagram of the usages of *yes* in which two categories will be posited: +POSSESSOR and -POSSESSOR. Possessive sentences will fall under the former category, ES and modals under the latter.

Section 3.6 will describe evidence from Borer (1984) that MH is a partial *pro*-drop language and will connect this phenomenon to that of the null expletive, which will become essential to arguments in Chapter 4 that *ze*, sometimes seen in the literature as a referential pronoun, is expletive in many contexts. I will also discuss the possibility that *yes*, as an expletive particle, can sometimes be phonologically null.

3.1. The Definiteness Effect

The Definiteness Effect, described above in section 2.1, is a restriction on the nature of the post-verbal NP in ES. In most cases, the NP must be indefinite. This seems to be the case in MH.

- (28) (a) *yes sefer ba-sifriya* (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist book on the-table
 'There is a book in the library.'
- (b) **yes ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya* (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There is this book in the library.'

(28a) is a typical ES in the present tense. The NP *book* in (28a) is indefinite, i.e. it is not marked by the definite article *ha*. Sentence (28b) is its minimal pair; the NP *the book* is definite and the sentence is ungrammatical.

On first glance this data seems to confirm the notion that the DE is a determining factor in whether an ES is grammatical or not in MH. Upon closer analysis it will become clear, however, that there is more at play here than just the inflectional definiteness of the NP. Also important here are the issues of specificity, uniqueness, and direct objecthood.

3.2 The Direct Object Marker *et* in MH

Ziv (1982) presents a grammatical ES with a structure similar to that of (28a) above, reprinted here as (29a), but she presents it as a minimal pair with a sentence with the structure in (29b):

- (29) (a) *yes sefer ba-sifriya*
 Exist book in-the-library
 'There is a book in the library.'
- (b) *yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya*
 Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There is [a copy] of this book in the library.'

Ziv uses sentence (29b), which contains a definite NP in a seemingly ES context and is grammatical, to question the function of the DE in MH ES. Her argument has a major flaw. This sentence is grammatical but does not form a minimal pair with (29a). Its structure deviates from (29a) in more than one way. Thus no contrast between the two sentences can be automatically attributed to a particular structural difference between the two and no real conclusions can be drawn.

The NP following the verb in ES is considered an object, though it is now generally termed the associate.¹⁹ Direct objects in MH must generally be marked by the direct object marker *et*. In a typical ES like (29a) above the direct object marker *et* is omitted. The addition of *et* to the sentence would make it ungrammatical:

- (30) *yes et sefer ba-sifriya (Schur, p.c.)
Exist D.O. book in-the-library

There are at least two major distinctions between the NP *sefer* in sentence (29a) and the NP *ha-sefer ha-ze* in sentence (29b):

i. The NP in (29a) is indefinite; that in (29b) is definite (marked by the definite article *ha*).²⁰

ii. The NP in (29a) cannot take the direct object marker; that in (29b) requires it.

Ziv might have neglected to point out the addition of *et* to sentences like (29b) because an underlying assumption about the nature of *et*. While the direct object marker

¹⁹ Milsark (1974:17) refers to this NP as an object. However, there are languages such as Icelandic that allow ES containing the subject of a transitive verb. An example follows in (vii).

(vii) Það lásu margir stúdentar þessa bók.
there read-pl. many students-Nom.pl this book-Acc

²⁰ The article *ha*, though its most common function is to precede definite NP, is not always a marker of definiteness. It can sometimes have the opposite function, marking a generic noun to specify a category denoted by that noun. In (viii.a) *ha-nachash* signifies the generic category "snakes", and that sentence is identical in interpretation to (viii.b).

(viii) (a) ha-nachash holech be-lachash
the-snake go-3s/m/present in-silence
'Snakes go quietly.'

(b) nechashim holchim be-lachash
snakes go-3pl/m/present in-silence
'Snakes go quietly.'

The usage of *ha* shown in sentence (viii.a) is often the mark of a poetic or antiquated style. See Glinert (1989:13) for more examples of this usage.

et is not itself a marker of definiteness, it does seem to appear only with definite NP objects.²¹ Glinert (1989:12) gives the following contrastive examples:

(31) (a) tavi li et ha-dag
bring-2s/f/imp me-DAT D.O. the-fish
'Bring me the fish.'

(b) tavi li et David
bring-2s/f/imp me-DAT D.O. David
'Bring David to me.'

(c) tavi li dag
bring-2s/f/imp me-DAT fish
'Bring me a fish.'

This will explain both the necessity of *et* in (29b) and its ungrammaticality in

(30). Ziv fails to point out either the presence of this definite direct object marker or the reason for its necessity. Even with the explanation that the word *et* is necessary in (29b) because it is marking a definite object, an important distinction exists between the meaning of (29a) and that of (29b). This third, interpretive distinction deals with the uniqueness/specificity of the NPs in (29a) and (29b). The NP in (29a) is indefinite but it must refer to a unique/specific entity. It cannot be taken to refer to a group of books, one of a group of books, or an example of some book. It must be taken to refer to a specific bound volume located in a specific library. Its function remains existential rather than locative because the purpose of the sentence is to assert the existence of a specific book in the library, not to locate a book that is already being discussed in the discourse. The

²¹ Glinert (1989:13) writes, "*et* is usually meaningless. It does not in itself express definiteness and is even omitted occasionally. However it sometimes serves as a superficial mark of grammatical definiteness where no other mark is evident." The pair of sentences that he provides as examples, reproduced in (ix) here may serve to illuminate role of *et* in disambiguating certain contexts:

(ix) (a) ani ochel ha-kol
"I eat anything."

(b) ani ochel et ha-kol
"I eat everything (that's there)."

NP in (29b) is definite but cannot have a unique/specific interpretation (i.e. cannot refer to a specific bound volume). Similarly, sentence (32) must have the meaning given in the gloss above, namely “There is *a copy* of this book in his house.”

(32) yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-bayit she-lo (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the-house of-him
 ‘There is [a copy] of this book in his house.’

We can prove this logically by assuming a scenario in which the speaker is holding up or pointing to one copy of a book, *War and Peace*, for example, and using this sentence to refer to another copy of *War and Peace* that happens to exist in the house of a friend. In this scenario, judged acceptable by a native speaker, the speaker cannot possibly be referring to a unique/specific copy of *War and Peace* since he is simultaneously referring to the copy in his hand and to the copy in his friend’s home. The addition of the words *a copy* make the sentence’s meaning clearer but are not part of the actual MH phrasing.

Before we go on to discuss the nature of this sentence and to review the literature that has been devoted to its construction, a third distinction between sentences (29a) and (29b) above can be added to the list above:

iii. The NP in (29a) is unique/specific; that in (29b) is not.

3.3 Definite NP in ES: Milsark’s and Ziv’s Analyses

Two analyses of sentence (29b), repeated here as (33), are possible.

(33) yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya
 Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 ‘There is [a copy] of this book in the library.’

The two possible analyses are as follows:

A. It is an ES that has a definite NP as its object; this NP must be accounted for as an exception to the DE.

B. It is something other than an ES.

The second analysis is the more difficult of the two to justify, since the force of the sentence is to assert that a copy (or more than one copy, possibly) of the book being discussed is available at a certain place, i.e. that something (a book, in one or more copies) exists somewhere (at the library). This seems in every way to be identical to the function of ES.

The first analysis has been discussed by both Milsark (1974) and Ziv (1982).

Milsark discusses exchanges in which a question elicits a response that looks like an ES but contains a definite NP.²² Two such exchanges are represented in (34).

- (34) (a) “Are there any pretty girls in the class?”
 “*Well, there’s the one with the curly brown hair.*”
- (b) “Is there anything to eat?”
 “*There’s the leftover pizza in the freezer.*”

In this type of discourse an ES is elicited that contains a definite NP. Milsark explains these NP as being intuitively understood as members of lists. In (34a), *the one with the curly brown hair* is understood to be one member of a list of all the pretty girls in the class. In (34b), one can imagine listing all the things available as food in the house: *the leftover pizza*, potatoes, cereal, etc. Similarly, in sentence (29b), repeated here as (35), the phrase *a copy of*, though not technically present in the MH wording, should be added to the translation of the sentence since the sentence can only refer to a generic book and not to a specific/unique book.

²² Milsark (1974:209)

- (35) yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya
 Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the library
 'There is [a copy of] this book in the library.'

According to this reading, Milsark claims, the definiteness of the pronounced NP is irrelevant since it is merely the surface remnant of an underlying, indefinite NP, the class of which is being operated upon by the ES.

Ziv (1982:266) goes so far as to consider sentences like (35) problematic for the classification of ES in MH. She interprets the DE as being an inviolable rule, rather than a generalization, and assumes that no definite NP can ever be present in ES. As discussed above, according to Milsark and others this is not necessarily the case.²³ Ziv, too, considers an explanation that entails an unpronounced indefinite NP head, but rejects it, claiming that such an analysis would "involve potentially ad-hoc modifications of notions such as 'anaphora' and 'unique reference' and would be clearly non-insightful"

Ziv confuses the nature of the DE and Milsark deals only with English ES, which differ from those in MH. I will propose briefly a third possible analysis which concerns itself directly with the properties of MH definite and indefinite NP.

The NP in (35) is definite but it is neither unique nor specific²⁴. The only grammatical interpretation of the NP *ha-sefer ha-ze* in the sentence is, "a copy of this

²³ Ziv (1982:262-3) bases much of the argumentation in her paper on the premise that (35) cannot be existential because it contains a definite NP. She writes:

The construction... seems to show some properties of existentials, but, unlike other existentials in CMH (Colloquial Modern Hebrew), it violates some of the putative universals and fulfils a communicative function other than establishing existence or introduction an entity into the discourse. The existential status of this construction will be at issue. The question will be raised as to what factors are to determine the typological classification of sentences, and problems of the delimitation of syntax, semantics and pragmatics will be crucially involved.

²⁴ The concept of uniqueness is one that must be carefully considered. Lyons (1999:8-9) explains that, "the uniqueness of the definite article is usually relative to a particular context, but it can be absolute." He gives the following examples in English, in which the referent of the definite article must necessarily be

book,” or even, according to a native speaker, “a similar book.” The sentence does not refer to a unique or specific bound volume.

We have now seen that the NP in (29b) is, in some ways, the inverse of that in (29a). Example (29) is repeated here as example (36).

- (36) (a) yes sefer ba-sifriya
Exist book on the-table
'There is a book in the library.'
- (b) yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya
Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
'There is [a copy] of this book in the library.'

In (36a) the NP is indefinite but has a unique/specific referent; in (36b) the NP is definite grammatically but has a generic referent.

This insight seems counter-intuitive to native English speakers, since in English the indefinite NP of an existential sentence, like any definite NP, must necessarily have a specific/unique object, as we can see in the examples in (37).²⁵

- (37) (a) There is a dog in the yard.
Definite NP: No
Specific/Unique Referent: Yes
- (b) The dog is in the yard.
Definite NP: Yes
Specific/Unique Referent: Yes

taken contextually, since the NP being referred to is hypothetical (i.e. does not yet exist as a unique entity at the time of the discourse):

- (1) **The winner of this competition** will get a week in the Bahamas for two.
(2) **The man who comes with me** will not regret it.

Lyons comments regarding this sentence explain the phenomenon:

“Assuming the competition in [Lyons’ (1)] is not yet over and no one has yet agreed to accompany the speaker in [Lyons’ (2)], the winner and the man are certainly not yet identifiable. But they are unique, in that a single winner and a single male companion are clearly implied.”

²⁵ This insight does not apply directly to definite NPs that are plural, such as:

- (x) We’ve just been to see John race. The Queen gave out **the prizes**. Lyons (1999:10).

For further discussion of the complicated phenomena of uniqueness in English NPs see Lyons (1999).

In MH, however, the indefinite NP in an existential sentence must have a specific/unique referent, whereas the definite NP of the sentence in (35) cannot be interpreted as having a specific/unique referent. Compare the sentences in example (38) with the English sentences in (37). Sentence (38a) (repeated from (29a) above) like (37a), contains an indefinite NP in an existential sentence. Like the NP in (37a), this NP refers to a specific/unique entity. Sentence (38b) contains a definite NP; unlike the definite NP in (37b), which must have a specific/unique referent, this NP cannot be interpreted as specific/unique.

- (38) (a) *yes sefer ba-sifriya*
 Exist book in-the-library
 'There is a book in the library.'
 Definite NP: No
 Specific/Unique Referent: No
- (b) *yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya*
 Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the library
 'There is [a copy] of this book in the library.'
 Definite NP: Yes
 Specific/Unique Referent: No

The interpretation of a unique, specific volume is actually impossible to achieve in MH following the particle *yes*. For a unique/specific interpretation to be available for a definite NP, the NP must not follow *yes*. Definite NP with unique/specific readings can be the subjects or objects of sentences in MH, as shown in (39).

- (39) (a) *ha-kelev ha-ze shayach lo* (Schur, p.c.)
 the-dog the-this belongs him-DAT
 'This (specific/unique) belongs to him.'
- (b) *mazati et ha-kelev ha-ze ba-rechov* (Schur, p.c.)
 found-1s./past D.O. the-dog the-this in-the-street
 'I found this [specific] dog in the street.'

The NPs in these sentences must be interpreted as specific, unique objects whose ownership by a specific person the speaker is asserting. It is impossible to construe the NP in (39a) as referring to 'a dog like this other one here,' or 'a dog of the type we were discussing.' However, the sentences no longer bear any resemblance to the existential; they lack the particle *yes*. In the presence of the particle *yes*, the same NP that is necessarily unique/specific in (39b) becomes necessarily generic in its interpretation. This is shown in (40).

- (40) *yes lo et ha-kelev ha-ze* (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist him-DAT D.O. the-dog the-this
 'He has a dog like the one we are talking about.'

Definite NP can also have unique/specific interpretations as the subjects of possessive sentences that do not use the particle *yes*, as is the case in (41).

- (41) *ha-sefer ha-ze she-lo* (Schur, p.c.)
 the-book the-this poss.-3p./sg./m.
 'This book is his.'

As we have seen above, possessive sentences can be formed with the particle *yes*.

Example (41) has as its counterpart the sentence in (42).

- (42) *yes lo et ha-sefer ha-ze* (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist him-DAT D.O. the-book the-this
 'He has a copy of this book.'

However, just like the definite NP in (40) above, the definite NP in (42) no longer carries the unique/specific interpretation of the identical NP in (41).

Definite NP which can be interpreted as unique/specific in contexts without *yes* suddenly lose that interpretation in contexts with *yes*. Some function of the nature of *yes* may be the cause of this alternation. No restriction on the definiteness of the NP following *yes* in MH ES seems to apply. There does seem to be a restriction on the

uniqueness/specificity the NP in such sentences, but that restriction appears only to apply in the case of a definite NP.

3.4 Is there a restriction on the post-verbal NP in MH ES?

We have seen an apparent restriction on the nature of definite NP that follow *yes*.

This same restriction, stating that these NPs must not be specific/unique, also holds true for the negative particle *eyn*, as shown in (43).

- (43) *eyn et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya* (Schur, p.c.)
 neg. D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There is not a copy of this book in the library.'

The restriction holds true for the past and future tenses of sentences that would, in the present tense, employ *yes*, as well. Though such sentences, examples of which are shown in (44), were judged somewhat unusual by a native speaker, when they are used the NP cannot be interpreted as specific/unique.

- (44) (a) *?haya et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-3s/m/past D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There was a copy of this book in the library.'
- (b) *?yihiyeh et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya* (Schur, p.c.)
 be-3s/m/future D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There will be a copy of this book in the library.'

Eyn, as well as the past and future tense ES, seem all to function in the same way as *yes*, allowing definite NPs but never with a unique/specific interpretation. Thus it seems that, for MH, the DE may exist but in a modified form. In ES with indefinite NPs, the NPs have a unique/specific interpretation. Definite NPs are also allowed in existential sentences, but never with a unique/specific interpretation. *Yes*, the expletive particle, seems to function in the same way in both ES and possessives in this regard.

3.5 The modal sentence

In addition to ES, MH has a modal sentence that takes the form shown in sentence (45):²⁶

- (45) yes li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist to-worry in-a-situation like-this
 'There is reason to worry in such a situation.'

The sentence must necessarily be impersonal. It cannot take an experiencer, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (46), which contains the experiencer *lo*.

- (46) *yes lo li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze (Schur, p.c.)
 Exist him-DAT to-worry in-a-situation like-this
 'There is reason for him to worry in such a situation.'

Yes functions in the modal sentence in exactly the same way as it does in ES, asserting the necessity of some action rather than the existence of some entity. The particle introduces the sentence and is followed by an IP whose subject must necessarily be arbitrary.

- (47) [_{IP}PRO_{ARB}[_I^o+inf.[PP]]]

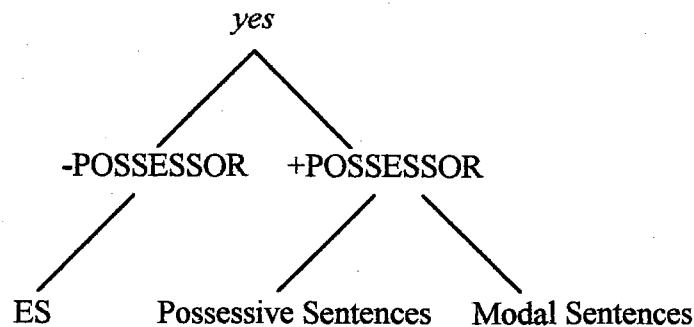
Hence the ungrammaticality of (46) above, in which PRO would be coindexed with the possessor as follows:

- (48) *yes [_{POSSESSOR}DAT_i]_i[_{PRO}_i[_I^o+inf[PP]]]

We have already seen that *yes* can take a Dative POSSESSOR in possessive, non-ES sentences. It is useful to think of *yes* as falling into two categories: +POSSESSOR and –POSSESSOR:

²⁶ I refer to this sentence as the modal sentence following Ziv (1982).

(49)



3.6 Partial *Pro*-Drop in MH

As discussed above, for most ES in most languages there is an alternative without an expletive subject, as shown in (50)

(50) (a) There is someone at the door

(b) Someone is at the door.

In MH the same holds true, but the alternative sentences use the particle *yes*, usually an expletive, in a non-expletive, sentence-internal position and with a suffixed clitic that is inflected for gender and number in agreement with the subject NP of the sentence. Note example (51).

(51) (a) *yes shlosha chatulim ba-gan*
 Exist three cats in-the-yard
 'There are three cats in the yard.'

(b) *shlosha chatulim yes-nam ba-gan*
 three cats exist+3/pl/m in-the-garden
 'Three cats are in the yard.'

(c) **shlosha chatulim yes ba-gan*
 three cats exist in-the-yard

(51a) is an ES; (51b) uses the particle + clitic complex sentence-internally; (51c) uses only the particle sentence-internally and is ungrammatical due to the absence of the clitic.

The particle + clitic complex appears in the present tense in exactly the same position in the sentence as would the inflected copular verb in the past or future tense. Compare (52a), which contains the particle + clitic complex, with (52b-c), which contain the copula.

- (52) (a) shlosa chatulim yes-nam ba-gan
 three cats exist + 3/pl/m in-the yard
 'Three cats are in the yard.'
- (b) shlosa chatulim hayu ba-gan
 three cats be-3s/m/past in-the-yard
 'Three cats were in the yard.'
- (c) shlosa chatulim yihiyu ba-gan
 three cats be-3s/m/future in-the-yard
 'Three cats will be in the yard.'

Borer (1984) observes that the particle-clitic complex behaves, "exactly like a fully inflected verb with respect to *pro*-drop."²⁷ MH is a partial *pro*-drop language. *Pro*-drop is generally associated with rich morphology; languages that allow *pro*-drop are generally those whose verbs are marked morphologically for gender, person and number. In Hebrew, only verbs of certain persons in certain tenses are richly marked; only the pronouns preceding these verbs can be dropped. Specifically, *pro*-drop in MH is found in the past and future tenses, and in those tenses only in the first and second persons. I will reproduce Borer's paradigm here as it elegantly illustrates the phenomenon. Items in parentheses are optional.

- (53) (a) (ani) achalti et ha-banana
 (I) ate D.O. the-banana
- (b) ani ochelet et ha-banana
 I eat D.O. the-banana

²⁷ Borer (1984:207)

- (c) * oxelet et ha-banana
eat D.O. the-banana
- (d) (ani) oxal et ha-banana
will-eat
- (54) (a) (atem) axaltem et ha-banana
(you-pl) ate D.O. the-banana
- (b) atem oxlim et ha-banana
eat
- (c) *oxlim et ha-banana
- (d) (atem) tochlu et ha-banana
will-eat
- (55) (a) hu achal et ha-banana
he ate D.O. the-banana
- (b) *axal et ha-banana
- (c) hu ochel et ha-banana
- (d) *ochel et ha-banana
- (e) hu yochal et ha-banana
will-eat
- (f) *yochal et ha-banana

Borer observes that *pro*-drop is not available in the present tense because present tense verbs are morphologically marked for gender and number but not for person. Similarly the third person in other tenses is unmarked, therefore *pro*-drop is not allowed in the case of third person verbs. Interestingly, the particle + clitic complex exhibits the same pattern. Once again I will draw examples from Borer (1984) to illustrate her point:

- (56) (a) (ani) eyn-eni ba-gan
'I am not in the garden.'

- (b) (ata) eyn-cha ba-gan
'You are not in the garden.'
- (c) (atem) eyn-chem ba-gan
'You-pl are not in the garden.'
- (d) hu eyn-enu ba-gan
'He is not in the garden.'
- (e) hem eyn-am ba-gan
'They are not in the garden.'
- (57) (a) (ani) eyn-eni yoda'at et ha-tsuva
'I don't know the answer.'
- (b) (atem) eyn-chem yod-im et ha-tsuva
'You-pl don't know the answer.'
- (58) (a) *eyn enu ba-gan (Compare with (56d))
- (b) *eyn-am ba-gan (Compare with (56e))

As if the sentences above contained a fully inflected verb instead of the particle + clitic complex, *pro*-drop is available only in the first and second persons. Tense is irrelevant here since *yes* exists only in the present tense.

Languages which allow *pro*-drop have null expletives.²⁸ Since MH is a partial *pro*-drop language, one might expect it to be a partial null-expletive language as well. In fact MH does seem to have an optional expletive.

Observe the following set of sentences in (59)

- (59) (a) yes kelev ba-gan (Schur, p.c.)
Exist dog in-the-yard
'There is a dog in the yard.'
- (b) kelev ba-gan (Schur, p.c.)
dog in-the-yard
'There is a dog in the yard.'

²⁸ Ouhalla (1999:316-17)

As discussed above, the copula is null in the present tense. Thus (59b) can be seen as having two possible analyses: either it has a null copula, or it is a copy of (59a) with a null expletive. Logically, the first analysis is impossible, as (59a) also omits the copula but includes the expletive. The analysis is flawed since, regardless of whether or not one prefers to argue that there is a null copula in (59b) there is still an element missing which, under normal circumstances, is present even in the absence of the copula. That element is the expletive particle *yes*. Thus the conclusion must be drawn that expletive *yes* may be optionally null and that this follows from the pattern of partial *pro*-drop in the language.²⁹

3.7 Conclusion

In this section I have described the behavior of the MH particle *yes*, whose function is somewhat similar to the English expletive *there*. Many languages have both *there*-type and *it*-type expletives. In the following section I will present the expletive *ze*, which can be seen as the near equivalent of the English expletive *it*. I will discuss the analysis of MH as having an optional expletive, using examples in which *ze* can be optionally dropped from existential sentences. I will consider this further proof that *ze* is an expletive.

²⁹ Optional expletives also occur in Welsh and Irish, both of which are partial *pro*-drop languages.

4.0 The *it*-existential: the nature of *ze*

In this chapter I will introduce the second MH expletive, *ze*. I will argue that *ze* is non-referential in several different contexts. I will also address the optional expletive in MH, introduced in chapter 3, in greater detail as it pertains to non-referential uses of *ze*.

4.1 The *it* expletive in English

English has two expletives: *there*, as in the ES

(60) There is an ant on your sandwich.

and *it*. A complete typology of expletive *it* in English would be impossible to present in a paper of this length, but some examples follow in (61).

(61) (a) It is disappointing that he didn't come to the party.

(b) It is surprising how many people showed up, though.

These instances if *it* do not refer to any element in the sentence.³⁰ *It* is a place-holder for an element that comes later in the sentence, namely *that he didn't come to the party* or *how many people showed up*. Like expletive *there* it is semantically empty, as shown by the fact that it cannot be questioned.³¹

(62) (a) What came out of nowhere? (The storm did.)

(b) *What is disappointing that he didn't come to the party?

(c) *What is surprising how many people showed up, though?

³⁰ One important point of the argument for expletive *it* is that it cannot be assigned a theta-role. The verb *is* in sentence (61a), for example, assigns only one theta-role, to the subject CP *that he didn't come to the party*. The sentence can be seen as having the original form,

(xi) (a) That he didn't come to the party is disappointing.

When expletive *it* is added, no theta-role is available to assign to it. Expletives are generally understood as not having theta-roles assigned to them. (Hazout 1994:266)

³¹ Haegeman and Guéron (1999:42) provides this test.

Expletive *it* also appears with a category of verbs called raising verbs, or verbs that allow subject-to-subject raising. One such verb in English is *seem*, as in (63).

(63) Casey seems to have won the race.

Sentence (63) is derived as follows:

(64) $[_{IP}[_{DP}Casey]_i \text{ seems } [_{IP}[_{DPT}_i] \text{ to have won the race}]]^{32}$

where *Casey* has been raised out of subject position of the embedded clause to act as the subject of the main clause. Another raising verb is *appear*, as in (65).

(65) Julie appears to have left the room.

Raising verbs cannot take a CP subject, but an embedded CP is possible with the subject of the CP retained in its normal position if expletive *it* is added as a dummy subject of the main clause. This is shown in the sentences in (66).

(66) (a) It seems that Casey has won the race.

(b) It appears that Julie has left the room.

The sentences in (66) cannot be reconfigured with the embedded CP as the subject of the main verb, with expletive *it* removed, as shown in (67).

(67) (a) *That Casey has won the race seems.

(b) *That Julie has left the room appears.

In English, the verbs *seem* and *appear* are similar in that neither verb takes an external argument. They are distinct in this way from other raising predicates

English also has a non-referential *it* in cleft sentences, which take the form shown in (68).

(68) (a) It was Elana who came to visit.

³² Derivation taken from Ouhalla (1999:84).

(b) It was she who stole the cookies from the cookie jar.

These are called cleft sentences because they entail the movement of a constituent to a position in which it receives contrastive focus and contrastive stress.³³ Note examples (69) and (70), in which the exchanges in (69b) and (70b) illustrate the force of the contrastive focus in cleft sentences.

(69) (a) Elana came to visit.

(b) Who was it who came to visit? **It was Elana who came to visit.**

(70) (a) She stole the cookies from the cookie jar.

(b) Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar? **It was she who stole the cookies from the cookie jar.**

In addition to expletive *it*, English has a weather *it*, which applies in very specific cases describing the weather or atmosphere and which is said to be a quasi-argument.³⁴ Examples of weather *it* in English are shown in (71).

(71) (a) It is cold.

(b) It is raining.

(c) It is nasty out.

While weather *it* is not exactly an expletive, its equivalent in many languages does seem to bear some resemblance to other expletives. Compare the French expletive *il y a* to the French sentence for “It is raining” in (72b).

(72) (a) Il y a quelqu’un a la porte.
 he there have someone at the door
 ‘There is someone at the door.’

³³ Haegeman and Guéron (1999:49). Clefting is also used as a test of constituency.

³⁴ As opposed to expletive *it*, which by the very nature of expletives is never in an argument position. Haegeman and Guéron (1999:144) uses the phrase quasi-argument *it*.

- (b) Il pleut.
 he rain
 'It is raining.'

In both sentences the third person masculine pronoun *il* is used, in (72a) as part of an expletive phrase *Il y a* and in (72b) as the weather semi-expletive. As will be discussed later, this similarity seems to exist in MH as well, where the third person neuter pronoun *ze* can be used both as an expletive subject and in weather sentences.

These categories of non-referential *it* will become useful in comparison to the various instantiations of the MH *ze*, which seems to function in many of the same ways.

4.2 Referential Uses of *Ze*

The MH word *ze* has several functions.³⁵ At its most basic it is a third person neuter pronoun. *Ze* can function very similarly to English *it* and to French *ça*. Compare the English, French and MH sentences in (73).

- (73) (a) I tried to ring the doorbell but it doesn't work.
- (b) J'ai l'essayé mais ça ne marche pas. (French)
 I have it-tried but it neg. work not
 'I tried it but it isn't working.'
- (c) zilzalti et ha-pa'amon aval ze lo poel. (MH)
 ring-1p/past D.O. the-bell but it not work
 'I rang the bell but it isn't working.'

In each of these sentences the pronoun is referential, referring back to, respectively, *the doorbell*, the pronoun *l'*, and *ha-pa'amon*.

³⁵ Many of the examples and explanations of the uses of *ze* were taken from Glinert (1989). My thanks to Rabbi Jason Rappoport for recommending Glinert's book as a resource.

Ze differs from *it* in that it has demonstrative force. Whereas the English neuter third-person singular pronoun *it* contrasts with the neuter third-person singular demonstrative pronoun *this*, as in (74), in MH *ze* serves both of these functions.

(74) (a) It's my favorite thing to do.

(b) This is my favorite thing to do.

In sentence (75), *ze* can mean either, 'It is the game that I love best.' or 'This is the game that I love best.'³⁶

(75) *ze ha-mischak she ani ohev be-yoter* (Schur, p.c.)
 it/this the-game that I love-1p/m/present in-most
 'It/This is the game that I love most.'

English further distinguishes between *this*, for immediate demonstrative referents, and *that* for remote demonstrative referents. MH has no such distinction. In English, sentence (76) contrasts between an immediate referent signified by *this* and a more remote one signified by *that*.

(76) This painting is good, but that one is better.

By contrast MH has the following, roughly equivalent, sentence, which uses *ze* for both functions, as in (77).

(77) *ze yafeh meod, aval ze ani lo mevinah bichlal.* (Schur, p.c.)
 this/that beautiful very but this/that I not understand-1s/f/present at all
 'This/that one is very beautiful but I don't understand this/that one at all.'

When *ze* is used as a demonstrative in a definite NP, the definite article *ha* is repeated, prefixed both to the noun and to *ze*, as in (78).

³⁶ This is the reason for many native MH speakers' confusion between *it* and *this* in English. One often hears native MH speakers of English saying things like, 'This was fun,' instead of the expected 'It was fun,' in response to questions such as, 'Did you enjoy that basketball game you went to last Sunday?'

- (78) (a) ha-sefer ha-ze meanyen li meod (Schur, p.c.)
 the-book the-this interest-3s/m/present me-DAT very much
 'This book interests me very much.'
- (b) *ha-sefer ze meanyen li meod (Schur, p.c.)
 the-book this interest-3s/m/present me-DAT very much
- (c) ha-yeled ha-ze margiz li. (Schur, p.c.)
 the-boy the-this annoy-3s/m/present me-DAT
 'This boy annoys me.'

In sentences like those in (79), where it refers to an NP, *ze* must be inflected for gender and number.

- (79) (a) ze yeled tov (Schur, p.c.)
 it boy good
 'This is a good boy.'
- (b) ha-yeled ha-ze margiz li (Schur, p.c.)
 the-boy the-this annoy-3s/m/present me-DAT
 'This boy annoys me.'
- (c) zot yalda tova (Schur, p.c.)
 it (f.) girl good
 'This is a good girl.'
- (d) ha-yalda ha-zot margiza li (Schur, p.c.)
 the-girl the-this annoy-3s/f/present me-DAT
 'This girl annoys me.'
- (e) eilu yeladim tovim (Schur, p.c.)
 these children good
 'These are good children.'
- (f) ha-yeladim ha-eilu margizim li (Schur, p.c.)
 the-children the-these annoy-3pl/m/present me-DAT
 'These children annoy me.'

4.3 Non-Referential *ze*

There are several methods available for distinguishing between referential *ze* and non-referential *ze*. Firstly, referential *ze* must be inflected for gender and number, as

shown above in section 4.2, but expletive *ze* is uninflected. The examples in (80) show that *ze* cannot be inflected when it is non-referential.

- (80) (a) *zot meanyen she-Dan kara et ha-sefer (Schur, p.c.)
 it(f.) interesting that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book
- (b) *eileh meanyen she-Dan kara et ha-sefer (Schur, p.c.)
 these interesting that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book
- (c) ze meanyen she-Dan kara et ha-sefer (Schur, p.c.)
 it interesting that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book

Secondly, non-referential *ze* in sentences like (80c) is identical to *it* in the English sentence in (81).³⁷

- (81) It is surprising that Louise should have abandoned the project.

It is clearly non-referential in sentence (81); Heagemon and Guéron (1999:42), from whom I have taken this sentence, write, “it does not refer to any particular referent in the discourse. Rather, *it* anticipates the clause *that Louise should have abandoned the project*”.

Non-referential *ze* can anticipate either a CP or an IP in the construction shown in (82) and (83). *Ze* has already been shown to be non-referential in these sentences; it cannot be inflected, as we have seen in example (80), and it is very similar to English *it* in sentence (81) which is routinely described as non-referential in the literature. I will now demonstrate that *ze* in these sentences is expletive, basing my argument on the fact that it is optional and that MH has an optional expletive, as discussed above in section 3.6.

In the sentences in (82) *ze* anticipates the CP *that Dan read the book*. The CP cannot raise to sentence initial position, making (82b) and (82d) ungrammatical.³⁸

³⁷ This sentence and its analysis are taken from Haegeman and Guéron (1989:42).

- (82) (a) *ze meanyen se Dan kara et ha-sefer* (Schur, p.c.)
 it interesting that Dan read D.O. the book
 'It is interesting that Dan read the book.'
- (b) **she Dan kara et ha-sefer ze meanyen* (Schur, p.c.)
 that Dan read D.O. the book it interesting
- (c) *meanyen she Dan kara et ha-sefer* (Schur, p.c.)
 interesting that Dan read D.O. the book
 'It is interesting that Dan read the book.'
- (d) **she Dan kara et ha-sefer meanyen* (Schur, p.c.)
 that Dan read D.O. the book interesting

Sentence (82c) is identical to the grammatical (82a) except that *ze* is null. From the fact that (82c) is grammatical as well we can gather that *ze* is optional in such sentences.

The sentences in (83) are similar to those in (82) except that *ze* anticipates an IP of the form [_{IP}PRO_{ARB} to push the table] rather than a CP. Raising to sentence-initial position, which was impossible for the CP in (82) above, is possible for the IP in (83) as seen in (83b) and (83d). Once again *ze* is optional: in both (83b) and (83c) it is null yet both sentences are grammatical.

- (83) (a) *ze kashe li-dxof et ha-shulchan* (Schur, p.c.)
 it hard to-push D.O. the-table
 'It is hard to push the table.'
- (b) *li-dxof et ha-shulchan ze kashe* (Schur, p.c.)
 to-push D.O. the table it hard
 'It is hard to push the table.'
- (c) *kashe li-dchof et ha-shulchan* (Schur, p.c.)
 hard to push D.O. the table
 'It is hard to push the table.'

³⁸ These sentences are taken from Hazout (1994). A native speaker consultant gave grammaticality judgments that diverged from those given by Hazout. I reprint the sentences here as they are found in Hazout but with the judgments of the present consultant.

- (d) li-dchof et ha-shulchan kashe (Schur, p.c.)
 to push D.O. the table hard
 'To push the table is hard.'

In other instances of non-referential *ze* this optional expletive is even more obvious. (84) and (85) contain examples from Glinert (1989:63) with optional *ze* in parentheses.

- (84) (ze) tov she-bat
 (it) good that-came-2s/f/past
 'It is good that you came.'
- (85) (ze) tov la-vo kzat ba-ichur
 (it) good to-come slightly late
 'It is good to arrive a little late.'

Where *ze* is possible, it can be dropped. However some predicates do not allow *ze* at all. These predicates do not allow for any subject and include *dy*, 'is sufficient' and *efshar*, 'is possible.' Hence (86) would be ungrammatical in the presence of *ze*.

- (86) (*ze) efshar li-nsoa
 possible to-travel.
 'It is possible to travel.'

The ungrammaticality of *ze* in sentences with these predicates must be seen not as a result of the optional expletive rule but as a result of the nature of such predicates, which are always subjectless.

MH also has a weather-*ze*. Like English weather-it, this *ze* is non-referential. As one would expect given the above arguments, it is also optional, as shown by the grammaticality of both (87a) and (87b)

- (87) (a)kar bachuz (Schur, p.c.)
 cold outside
 'It is cold outside.'

(b) *ze kar bachuz*
it cold outside
'It is cold outside.'

(Schur, p.c.)

4.4 Conclusion

The MH word *ze* has many functions, some referential and some non-referential. Many of its non-referential functions resemble those of the English expletive *it*. In addition, *ze* is optional in many non-referential positions. These facts lead to the conclusion that *ze* is expletive. There is much more to be said about *ze* and about *it*-type expletives in general.³⁹ Without extending this paper beyond its intended scope I have attempted to prove that non-referential *ze* can be seen as an expletive and that it behaves as an expletive with respect to the rule established above of optional-expletive in MH.

³⁹ For an excellent overview of the uses of *ze* see Glinert (1989), chapter 7.

5.0 Conclusion

In this essay I have examined the forms of *there*-type and *it*-type existential sentences in Modern Hebrew. I have attempted to show that the expletive particle *yes*, used in the *there*-type ES, can take a definite NP as its associate, though exclusively with a non-specific/unique interpretation. I have also proposed that MH has an optional expletive, following from the fact that it is a partial *pro*-drop language. Both *yes* and the *it*-type expletive *ze* have been shown to be optional in ES. I have argued that this property of *ze* serves as evidence for the fact that *ze* is expletive.

Many more pages could be written on the topic of MH ES and the properties of the two ES expletives, *yes* and *ze*. It is my hope that further research in this area may draw on the conclusions made here.

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Appendix

This appendix contains data gathered in a series of interviews with Yechiel Schur, a 31-year old native speaker of Modern Hebrew. Data is grouped according to its relevance to particular sections of this essay. Brief descriptions are given of the conclusions that have been drawn based on grammaticality judgments of sentences in each group.

A. Yes

I. The following sentences show alternations in ES and possessives between *yes*, the negative particle *eyn*, and the copula in past and present tenses.

- (1) *yes kelev ba-gan*
 Exist dog in-the-garden
 'There is a dog in the garden.'
- (2) *eyn kelev ba-gan*
 neg. dog in-the-garden
 'There is no dog in the garden.'
- (3) *haya kelev ba-gan*
 be-3s/m./past dog in-the-garden
 'There was a dog in the garden.'
- (4) *yihyeh kelev ba-gan*
 be-sg./fut. dog in-the-garden
 'There will be a dog in the garden.'
- (5) *yes lo kelev*
 exist him-DAT dog
 'He has a dog.'
- (6) *eyn lo kelev*
 neg. him-DAT dog

'He does not have a dog.'

(7) haya lo kelev
be-sg./past him-DAT dog
'He had a dog.'

(8) yihiyeh lo kelev
be-sg./fut. him-DAT dog
'He will have a dog.'

(9) *yes lo kelev ba-avar
Exist him-DAT dog in-the-past

(10) *yes lo kelev ba-atid
Exist him-DAT dog in-the-future

(11) *lo yes lo kelev⁴⁰
not exist him-DAT dog

II. The following sentences show that the direct object marker *et* cannot be present in ES with indefinite NP.

(12) *yes et kelev ba-gan
Exist D.O. dog in-the-garden

(13) *eyn et kelev ba-gan
neg. D.O. dog in-the-garden

(14) *haya et kelev ba-gan
be-3s/m./past D.O. dog in-the-garden

(15) *yihiyeh et kelev ba-gan
be-3s/m./fut. D.O. dog in-the-garden

III. The following sentences show that ES and possessive sentences with definite NP are ungrammatical without the direct object marker *et*.

⁴⁰ This sentence, which is ungrammatical, shows that *yes* cannot be negated with the negative adverb *lo* as can most predicates.

- (16) *eyn ha-kelev ha-ze ba-gan
neg the-dog the-this in-the-garden
- (17) *eyn lo ha-kelev ha-ze
neg. him-DAT the-dog the-this
- (18) *haya ha-kelev ha-ze ba-gan
be-sg./past the-dog the-this in-the-garden
- (19) *yihiyeh ha-kelev ha-ze ba-gan
be-sg./fut. the-dog the-this in-the-garden
- (20) *haya lo ha-kelev ha-ze
be-sg./past him-DAT the-dog the-this
- (21) *yihiyeh lo ha-kelev ha-ze
be-sg./fut. him-DAT the-dog the-this

IV. The following sentences show that ES and possessives with definite NP are grammatical in the presence of the direct object marker *et*. The speaker judged the NP in each sentence for specificity/uniqueness and stated for all of the following sentences that the NP could not be interpreted as specific/unique.

- (22) ?yes et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya
Exist D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
'There is a copy of this book in the library.'
- (23) ?eyn et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya
neg. D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
'There is not a copy of this book in the library.'
- (24) yes lo et ha-sefer ha-ze
Exist him-DAT D.O. the-book the-this
'He has a copy of this book.'
- (25) eyn lo et ha-sefer ha-ze
neg. him-DAT D.O. the-book the-this
'He does not have a copy of this book.'
- (26) ?haya et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya

be-3s/m/past D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There was a copy of this book in the library.'

(27) ?yihyeh et ha-sefer ha-ze ba-sifriya
 be-3s/m/future D.O. the-book the-this in-the-library
 'There will be a copy of this book in the library.'

(28) *hayu et ha-sefarim ha-eilu ba-sifriya⁴¹
 be-3p/m/pas D.O. the-books the-these in-the-library

(29) haya lo et ha-kelev ha-ze
 be-3s/m./past him-DAT D.O. the-dog the-this
 'He had this [type of] dog.'

(30) yihyeh lo et ha-kelev ha-ze
 be-3s/m./fut. him-DAT D.O. the-dog the-this
 'He will have this [type of] dog.'

V. The following sentences show possessive constructions that do not use expletive subjects.

(31) eyn ha-kelev ha-ze she-lo
 neg. the-dog the-this his
 'This dog is not his.'

(32) ha-kelev ha-hu haya she-lo
 the-dog the-him be-3s/m/past his
 'That dog was his.'

(33) ha-kelev ha-hu lo haya she-lo
 the-dog the-he not be-3s/m/past his
 'That dog was not his.'

(34) ha-kelev ha-ze shelo
 the-dog the-this his
 'This dog is his.'

(35) ha-kelev ha-ze shayach lo
 the-dog the-this belong-3s/m/present him-DAT
 'This dog belongs to him.'

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that this sentence has a plural NP and an agreeing, plural verb and is ungrammatical. Its minimal pair with a singular NP and an agreeing, singular verb is grammatical.

B. Ze

I. The following shows native speaker judgments about sentences provided in Hazout (1994). Note that these judgments diverge from those given by Hazout. This data is significant in the context of non-referential instances of *ze*.

(36) *ze meanyen she-Dan kara et ha-sefer*
 it interesting that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book
 'It is interesting that Dan read the book.'

(37) *ze kashe li-dchof et ha-shulchan*
 it difficult to-push D.O. the-table
 'It is difficult to push the table.'

(38) **she-Dan kara et ha-sefer ze meanyen*
 that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book it interesting
 'That Dan read the book is interesting.'

(39) *li-dchof et ha-shulchan ze kashe*
 to-push D.O. the-table it difficult
 'To push the table is difficult.'

(40) *meanyen she-Dan kara et ha-sefer*
 interesting that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book
 'It is interesting that Dan read the book.'

(41) *kashe lidchof et ha-shulchan*
 difficult to-push D.O. the-table
 'It is difficult to push the table.'

(42) ?*she-Dan kara et ha-sefer meanyen*
 that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book interesting
 'That Dan read the book is interesting.'

(43) ?*lidchof et ha-shulchan kashe*
 to-push D.O. the-table difficult
 'To push the table is difficult.'

(44) **ze nireh she-Itamar shuv meacher*
 it appears that-Itamar again be-late-3s/m/present
 'It appears that Itamar is late again.'

- (45) nireh she-Itamar shuv meacher
appear that-Itamar again be-late-3s/m/present
'It appears that Itamar is late again.'
- (46) *ze nishma zilzul pa'amon
it hear-PASSIVE/3s/m/present ring bell
'The ring of a bell is heard.'
- (47) *nishma zilzul pa'amon
hear-PASSIVE/3s/m/present ring bell
'The ring of a bell is heard.'
- (48) *ze zarich la'avod
it need-3s/m/present to-work
'It is necessary to work.'
- (49) *ze nimsar she-Dan higiah
it communicatePASSIVE/3s/m/past that-Dan arrive-3s/m/present
'It is said that Dan has arrived.'
- (50) *ze duvach al ha-teunah
it report-PASSIVE/3s/m/past on the-accident
'The accident was reported.'
- (51) ze haya kar
it be-3s/m/past cold
'It was cold.'
- (52) ze haya meanyen lishmoah et Dina
it be-3s/m/past interesting to-hear D.O. Dina
'It was interesting to hear Dina.'
- (53) pa'am, linsoah li'Amerika ze haya harpatka'a
one time, to-travel to-America it be-3s/m/past event
'At one time, traveling to America was an event.'
- (54) *she-Dan kara et ha-sefer ze meanyen
that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book it interesting
'That Dan read the book is interesting.'
- (55) lidchof et ha-shulchan ze kashe
to-push D.O. the-table it difficult
'To push the table is difficult.'

- (56) *ha-monit ha-zot, Dani hizmin ota
 the-car the-this Dani order-3s/m/past
 'Dani ordered this car.'
- (57) ?ani roeh she-ha-monit ha-zot, ata hizmanta ota
 I see-1s/present that-the-car the-this, you invite-2s/m/past it
 'I see that you ordered this car.'
- (58) Dina omeret she-lilmod Sinit ze kashe
 Dina say-3s/f/present that-to-learn Chinese it difficult
 'Dina says that to learn Chinese is difficult.'
- (59) ze tov she-Dina achla et ha-banana
 it good that-Dina eat-3s/f/past D.O. the-banana
 'It is good that Dina ate the banana.'
- (60) ze kashe lilmod Sinit
 it difficult to-learn Chinese
 'It is difficult to learn Chinese.'
- (61) ani choshevet she-ze tov she-Dina nichshila ba-mivchan
 I think-1s/present that-it good that-Dina fail-3s/f/past on-the-test
 'I think that it is good that Dina failed the test.'
- (62) Dina omeret she-ze kashe lilmod Sinit
 Dina say-3s/f/present that-it difficult to-learn Chinese
 'Dina says that it is difficult to learn Chinese.'
- (63) ha-sipur hee she-Dina achla et ha-banana
 the-story she that-Dina eat-3s/f/past D.O. the-banana
 'The story is that Dina ate the banana.'
- (64) ha-bi'aya hayta lilmod Sinit
 the-problem be-3s/f/past to-learn Chinese
 'The problem was to learn Chinese.'
- (65) *ma ze tov she-Dina achla
 what it good that-Dina eat-3s/f/past
 'What is it good that Dina ate?'
- (66) *ma ze kashe lilmod
 what it difficult to-learn
 'What is it difficult to learn?'

- (67) ma ata choshev she-Dina achla
 what you think-2s/m/present that-Dina eat-3s/f/past
 'What do you think that Dina ate?'
- (68) ma ata ma'amin she-kashe lilmod
 what you believe-m/present that-difficult to-learn
 'What do you believe that it is difficult to learn?'
- (69) Dina achla et ha-banana aval ze lo chashuv
 Dina eat-3s/f/past D.O. the-banana but it not important
 'Dina ate the banana but it is not important.'
- (70) meanyen she-Dina karah et ha-sefer
 interesting that-Dina read-3s/f/past D.O. the-book
 'It is interesting that Dina read the book.'
- (71) kashe lidchof et ha-shulchan
 difficult to-push D.O. the-table
 'It is difficult to push the table.'
- (72) ha-sipur ha-ze meanyen et Dina
 the-story the-this interest-3s/m/present D.O. Dina
 'This story interests Dina.'
- (73) *meanyen et Dina
 interest-3s/m/present D.O. Dina
 'It interests Dina.'
- (74) ha-bi'aya kashe meod
 the-problem difficult very
 'The problem is very difficult.'
- (75) *she-Dan kara et ha-sefer meanyen
 that-Dan read-3s/m/past D.O. the-book interesting
 'That Dan read the book is interesting.'
- (76) lidchof et ha-shulchan kashe
 to-push D.O. the-table difficult
 'To push the table is difficult.'
- (77) ze tov lilmod Anglit
 it good to-learn English
 'It is good to learn English.'

- (78) tov lilmod Anglit
good to-learn English
'It is good to learn English.'
- (79) ze tipshi lilmod Anglit
it silly to-learn English
'It is silly to learn English.'
- (80) tipshi lilmod Anglit
silly to-learn English
'It is silly to learn English.'
- (81)* ma ze tov lilmod?
what it good to-learn
'What is it good to learn?'
- (82) ma tov lilmod?
what good to-learn
'What is it good to learn?'
- (83) *ma ze chashuv she-nireh
what it important that-appear-3s/m/present
'What is it important that appears?'
- (84) ma chashuv she-nireh
what important that-appear-3s/m/present
'What is important that appears?'
- (85) nimsar she-kara ha-teunah
report-PASSIVE/3s/m/past that-occur-3s/m/past the-accident
'It was reported that the accident occurred.'
- (86) tov she-bata
good that-come/2s/m/past
'It is good that you came.'
- (87) lachazot et hagvul ze ma'aseh mesukan
to-cross D.O. the-border it act dangerous
'To cross the border is a dangerous act.'
- (88) lomar davar ka-ze zo tipshut
to-say thing like-it this silliness
'To say something like that is silliness.'

(89) ze ma'ase mesukan lachazot et ha-gvul
 it act dangerous to-cross D.O. the-border
 'It is a dangerous act to cross the border.'

(90) *ma'aseh mesukan lachazot et ha-gvul
 act dangerous to-cross D.O. the-border
 'It is a dangerous act to cross the border.'

(91) *tipshut lomar davar ka-ze
 silliness to-say thing like-this
 'It is silliness to say a thing like that.'

C. Modal Sentences

I. The following sentences demonstrate the ungrammaticality of a possessor in the modal construction and demonstrate that PRO in these sentences must be arbitrary and cannot be co-indexed with any NP.

(92) yes li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist to-worry in-the-situation like-this
 'It makes sense to worry in a situation like this.'

(93) *yes lo li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist him-DAT to-worry in-the-situation like-this

(94) *yes she-hu doeg ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist that-he worry-3s/m/present in-the-situation like-this

(95) *yes lo li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist him-DAT to-worry in-the-situation like this

(96) *yes lo lahem li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist him-DAT them-DAT to-worry in-the-situation like-this

(97) *yes lo she-hem yidagu ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist him-DAT that-they worry-3p/m/future in-the-situation like-this

(98) *yes lo hu yidog ba-mazav ka-ze
 exist him-DAT him worry-3s/m/future in-the-situation like-this

*18) yes lo lo li-dog ba-mazav ka-ze
exist him-DAT him-DAT to-worry in-the-situation like-this