Why is *This Day* Different from all Others?

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Hebrew Lexical Day Names

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

The idiosyncrasies found in these data can be motivated, although in principle they cannot be predicted. Moreover, it is odd to find the two different ways of counting lexical day names in one language. In contrast to the "slot-filler" approach, as adopted previously in accounts of Semitic morphophonemic phenomena (McCarthy 1981), the Construction Grammar framework is particularly well suited for these data.

Much of the foundational work of Construction Grammar focused on English (Fillmore et al., 1988), while studies of other languages continue to test and demonstrate the efficacy of the approach for various grammatical phenomena (Boas 2003, Fried 1999, Fujii 2004). The present work contributes to the latter effort within the morphological and lexical dimension of grammar.