

Unique Linguistic Awareness in the Israeli Media in the Corona Days and *Tishrei* Holidays

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The article illustrates and analyzes neologisms created during the corona period and the *Tishrei* holidays (= September 2020), and published in Hebrew newspapers and social media in Israel. These neologisms based on dismantling a bound collocation deliberately disrupt one or two of its features. The corpus is a collection of 32 statements containing puns and neologisms based mainly on Hebrew sources and texts from the prayer, and a minority of familiar texts. These compositions have a strong rhetorical effect—the allusion connects to the holidays and the corona virus and creates a combined message in addition to the separate messages that emerge from each of the elements. The works are innovative, surprising, enjoyable and create an ironic effect. Moreover, they are extensive and invite profound and complex thoughts.

Keywords: puns, linguistic awareness, neologisms, bound collocation

The article illustrates and analyzes headlines and statements based on puns and neologisms created during the corona period and the *Tishrei* holidays in Israel.

First, we will explain the Hebrew terms "*Tishrei* holidays" and "the holiday period", which describe the Jewish way of life. According to the Hebrew calendar, *Rosh Hashanah* (the New Year) falls in the month of *Tishrei*, which roughly parallels September in the Gregorian calendar. In *Tishrei*, Jews celebrate four festivals: *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) and its culmination, *Simhat Torah*, when the annual cycle of reading a *Torah* portion each week comes to an end and is restarted. Together, these four festivals are the holiday period.

Linguistic Awareness

Linguistic awareness realizes the meta-linguistic function and means knowledge of the language and an ability to use that knowledge for diverse purposes (Jakobson, 1970). Schwarzwald (1987; 1997) distinguished between knowledge of the language and linguistic awareness. Knowledge of the language is the potential and actual natural knowledge in the subconscious, in which the speaker is unaware of language phenomena. Knowledge of a language is gained with its acquisition, which is accomplished in two ways: by grasping the relations and the great constancy in the language in processes of independent creation, and by simple imitation and mechanical repetition of numerous language phenomena and learning by way of stimulus-reaction. Linguistic awareness is the area in which the knowledge of the language is not hidden and concealed but is

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overt and clear to the speaker who is alert to what is happening in his language. According to Pratt and Grieve (1984), meta-linguistic awareness is the ability to engage in language as a separate area of thought, to investigate its properties, to hypothesize about it, to examine it, and to learn about it. Shalom (2000) explained it can be seen in all branches of a language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics). This means that a person with linguistic awareness is someone in whom linguistic reality awakens his familiarity with the language or who examines the linguistic reality—or both.

The article will focus on neologisms and puns that dismantle a bound collocation.

During the *Tishrei* holiday period in 2020, with the corona pandemic at its height, the printed and digital media in Israel and the social networks saw sophisticated headlines and witty phrases referencing biblical sources and delivering messages linked to corona virus and to the festivals. These works reflect a high linguistic awareness by the creators and the editors (in Israel, the editor, rather than a copy editor, has the authority to change the headline).

In normal times we find allusions to various holidays, but this year a rare connection was created between elements from the sources and from prayer in particular, and elements from the discourse on the corona pandemic. This composition has a strong rhetorical effect—the allusion connects to the reality and existence of the holidays and the corona virus, and creates a combined message in addition to the separate messages that emerge from each of the elements. These works are innovative, surprising and sometimes also enjoyable, and create an ironic effect (Gadish, Priluck, & Rosner, 2003). Moreover, the phrases are more extensive and invite profound and complex thoughts.

The Headline: Definition and Rhetoric

Important research papers dealing with the language of headlines were written, for example, by Straumann (1935), Booth (1961), and Kellman (1975). Nir (1982; 2004) defined the headline as a verbal sequence that appears at the head of an item or article and is separated from them by a certain space and typographical differentiation. Schlesinger (2000, p. 142) pointed to two principal functions of the headline, each of which could influence its verbal-stylistic character: the first is basic communication—delivering information by means of concise wording, which is aimed at the reader who makes do with the headline. Such a headline is usually simple and uses special rhetorical means. The second is "marketing"—its purpose is to grab the attention of the reader and make him want to know more, and its target is likely to read the text. A headline of this kind also uses rhetorical means, and the wording is dramatic and sometimes even provocative.

Most of the linguistic witticisms presented in the article are based on quotations from the Jewish sources that have been altered in a sophisticated way to arrive at a message that combines a reference to corona virus and to the *Tishrei* holidays. These grammatical changes of the quotations are achieved by deviations in bound collocations. Nir and Roeh (1993) related to the quotation as a rhetorical means that occupies a respected place in headlines and various phrases, and they call this manner of wording "poetic design". Many of them are taken from cultural sources, mainly national and religious, and their creative wording awakens connotations. Kantor (1999-2000) examined hundreds of newspaper headlines published in Israel over a period of 12 years, mostly in the 1990s, and found many of them referred back to bound collocations from Jewish sources, mainly in political articles and the sports sections. Widespread use of these headlines is seen in periods when some dramatic event has occurred. The findings in Kantor's research point to similar findings in our research. The corona pandemic calls for the integration of a communication discourse that is typified by sophisticated rhetoric,

and when so powerful an event occurs in the holiday period, the potential for witty word play based on the Jewish sources is even greater.

A bound collocation is two or more words juxtaposed in a fixed order, as well as a sequence of words that tend to appear together, also in a fixed order (Touri & Margalit, 1973). Nir (1990, p. 124) defined the bound collocation as a lexical compound whose "fixed-ness" is reflected in one of the following two properties or in both of them: (1) idiomatic—at least one of the words that make up the bound collocation has a different meaning within the bound collocation from its more general meaning. For example, in Hebrew, *kaffeh hafukh* means Cappuccino, but the word *hafukh* is not construed in its more general meaning of "upside down" or "backwards".

(2) Cohesion—there is a close connection between the elements of the bound collocation, and therefore the ability to complete the collocation based on part of it is more likely than not, i.e. given one part of, its whole structure can be anticipated. For example, in Hebrew, the bound collocation corresponding to "pangs of conscience" is *nekifot matspun*. If we delete the word *matspun*, it is easy to guess the bound collocation. The same is true in English—if we delete the words "pangs of", the bound collocation is obvious.

It is worth adding a third property to these two, one that characterizes most bound collocations: (3) grammatical permanence—a semantic grammatical property that is expressed in the limitations of inflection that apply to the elements of the bound collocations. Grammatical permanence is seen in the fact that change in the elements of the bound collocations cannot be made without loss of its character. Sternberg (1976) provided a sentence from journalese in which the grammatical permanence is disrupted: "The act of forming the new government is an act of the decaying of politics". This disruption is based on the fact that in Hebrew, the roots *resh-kaf-bet* and *resh-kof-bet* are homonyms, and in this way the writer is expressing his opinion on the act of forming, which he sees as a negative and rotten act. According to Touri and Margalit (1973), this kind of deviational use of the bound collocation is widespread in standard register in the press and to a great extent also in headlines. Shalom (2000), Peleg and Eviatar (2009), and Raviv (2020) showed how this linguistic manipulation is sometimes used to create humor and irony.

Innovations based on dismantling a bound collocation deliberately disrupt one or two of its features, for example: "last aid" instead of "first aid", to denote that help was greatly delayed. The effect of such dismantling is a clear diversity of style stemming from superlative knowledge of the language (Landau, 1988, p. 26). Apart from language innovations, there are also language neologisms that express different statements. In this article we bring quotations and bound collocations related to the holidays that have undergone a grammatical alteration, mostly by replacing one or more elements with another word in order to transmit a message that brings together the world of Jewish religion and its culture with that of the corona pandemic. This rhetoric creates interesting neologisms and puns, some of which have an ironic aspect.

Methodology and Findings

The research work is a collection of statements containing puns and neologisms from the newspapers *Israel Hayom, Makor Rishon, and Ynet.* Other examples were taken from correspondence on social media. Another five examples are taken from advertisements, a local newspaper, and stand-up comedy.

The bound collocations were sorted by the *Tishrei* holidays and by the above sources, and the date of publication is given. No date is given with the examples taken from social networks, since the primary source is unknown and the posts are shared in the network without knowing when they were written and who wrote them.

During the period of the high holy days, 32 examples were found, based mainly on the language of the Hebrew sources and texts from the prayer, and a minority of familiar texts.

The Examples

The expressions and neologisms are presented as published before and during the *Rosh Hashanah* holiday period. Following the explanation, we will present the meaning of expressions in two worlds of content, and then the third meaning, which arises from those two meanings.

Expressions and Puns in the Rosh Hashanah Spirit

Judaism believes that on *Rosh Hashanah* God decides the verdict of every person—to live or to die, and on *Yom Kippur* he signs that verdict. Prior to *Rosh Hashanah*, every Jew has a duty of self-examination on his relationship with his religion and with society. This examination requires repentance in two ways: by asking forgiveness from God and adhering more strictly to the commandments, and by asking forgiveness from friends and relatives for any negative behavior towards them during the year that is coming to an end.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated on the first two days of *Tishrei*, and includes a special and longer form of the synagogue prayers, as well as festive meals with special foods.

1. A year of mask removal (Shana shel hasarat masekhot)

Makor Rishon, 18.9.20, the eve of Rosh Hashanah

On this day the usual greeting is "Shana Tova". This year we added a wish for mask removal.

The bound collocation hints at two content worlds: the new year atmosphere, and the mask-wearing decree to avoid infection by Covid-19. The combination of these two worlds creates a third layer of meaning: a reference to a threat that has been unknown since the beginning of the 20th century.

2. Zoom out year (Shnat ha-zoom out)

Makor Rishon weekend supplement, 18.9.20, the eve of Rosh Hashanah

Rosh Hashanah + lessons by Zoom > a wish to end the Zoom lessons that are so difficult for students, teachers, and parents. This is one of three examples of innovations consisting of a Hebrew word and an English word "Zoom".

Expressions and Puns Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

3. Who is outside, who is inside? (mi bahuts u-mi bifnim)

Israel Hayom, 25.9.20, day 7 between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

An allusion to the *Unetanneh tokef* prayer attributed to Rabbi Amnon of Mainz: "Who by water, who by fire". The bound collocation in the prayer was written in the spirit of the *Mussaf* prayer recited on *Rosh Hashanah*. The effect of the deviation from the bound collocation:

Judgment Day atmosphere + lockdown during the holidays because of corona > who will die of corona will be decided on Judgment Day.

4. Who will be on a ventilator, who will not? (mi yunsham u-mi lo)

Makor Rishon, 25.9.20

The effect of the deviation from the bound collocation:

Judgment Day atmosphere + corona patients connected to the soul machine > who will die of corona will be decided on Judgment Day.

5. Feast of the sacrifice (*Eid ul-adha*, a Muslim holiday)

Israel Hayom, 25.9.20

The bound collocation recalls the Muslim feast of the sacrifice, which followers believe denotes the binding of *Ishmael*.

Judgment Day atmosphere + the victims of corona > who will be a victim of corona will be decided on Judgment Day.

6. Signed and sealed (*hatum ve-sagur*)

Israel Hayom, 25.9.20

Jews believe that the judgment set for every person on *Rosh Hashanah* is finally signed on *Yom Kippur*. An allusion to the greeting: May you be signed and sealed in the Book of Life.

Signing of the judgment on *Yom Kippur* + continued lockdown > the continuation or halt to the corona epidemic is signed on *Yom Kippur*.

Expressions and Puns in the Spirit of Yom Kippur

The first ten days of *Tishrei*, up to *Yom Kippur*, are known as "the ten days of penitence", when extra care is taken to fulfill the commandments, and those who omitted the self-examination before *Rosh Hashanah* are now granted a second opportunity. On *Yom Kippur*, which falls on the tenth day of *Tishrei*, Jews fast and pray that the verdict will be signed for life and not death, for health and not sickness.

7. We have disinfected against you (hitenu lefanekha)

Israel Hayom, 25.9.20

Deviation from the bound collocation: "We have sinned against you" (hatanu lefanekha).

In Hebrew, the word hata = to sin) resembles the root letters of the verb hite = to disinfect, which connects the content worlds.

On *Rosh Hashanah* we ask for forgiveness for our sins + in the time of corona we disinfect against the epidemic > disinfection cleans us from the sins of the past.

8. Lock time (she 'at ne 'ila)

Reshet (TV channel), Yom Kippur

A deviation from the bound collocation: "*ne* '*ila* prayer" (*tefilat ne* '*ila*). The expression appeared against a backdrop of synagogues closed during the lockdown.

The prayer recited towards the end of *Yom Kippur* + locked synagogues > is God locking us out of the possibility of forgiveness?

9. All the vows and oaths—(kol esarei ve-kunasei)

Reshet (TV channel), the eve of Yom Kippur

The prayer offered up on the eve of *Yom Kippur* is known as *Kol Nidrei*, which annuls vows. In the text, the worshipers rescind all the oaths and vows they made during the year, so as not to be punished for failing to fulfill them.

All the vows—all the prohibited things from which we abstained.

All the oaths—the promises and obligations we did not fulfill.

This saying was written in the spirit of corona, which imposes on us prohibitions that are punishable by a fine. The word *kunasei* is not Hebrew (it is a borrowed word from Aramaic), but its sound recalls the Hebrew words *knas* (fine) and *hitkansut* (gathering).

Yom Kippur + the fear of corona > annulling vows, which reminds us of the ban on being close and the duty to stay in our homes and avoid fines.

Expressions and Puns in the Spirit of Sukkot

The third festival is *Sukkot*, when Jews are commanded to build a *sukkah* (tabernacle) and to live in it for a week, in commemoration of the dwellings that were used by the Jews during their long journey to Israel after the exodus from Egypt. During the *Sukkot* holiday, it is customary to host and be hosted in the *sukkah* of others to observe the commandment of hospitality.

10. Our health sukkah (sukkat bri'utenu)

Israel Hayom, 2.10.20

The expression came into being in analogies with bound collocations that connect the *sukkah* with peace: *"sukkat shalom"* and *"sukkat shlomeinu"*.

The *Sukkot* festival + the prayer for health in the corona period > staying in the *sukkah* during lockdown preserves our health.

11. And you rejoiced in your house (ve-samahta be-vetkha)

Reshet (TV channel), Sukkot

Deviation from the bound collocation: "ve-samahta be-hagekha" (Deuteronomy, 16:14).

Sukkot + risk of corona > the commandment to rejoice on the holiday will be fully implemented if we stay home, locked down, and do not visit others during *Sukkot*.

12. And you rejoiced in your life (ve-samahta be-hayekha)

Makor Rishon, 9.10.20, eve of Simhat Torah)

Deviation from the bound collocation: "ve-samahta be-hagekha" (Deuteronomy, 16:14).

Sukkot + risk of corona > the real joy of the holiday is that we remained alive despite the epidemic.

13. Our sukkah is open, welcome to be fined (hasukkah shelanu ptuha, muzmanim le-hikanes)

Reshet (TV channel), during Sukkot

This pun is based on two Hebrew homophones-lehikanes (to enter - להיכנס) and lehikanes (להיכנס) - to be fined).

The commandment to host visitors during Sukkot + the rampaging epidemic > anyone breaking the lockdown will pay a fine (ironic pun: the commandment becomes an offense).

14. Hospitalization in the days of ushpizin (ishpuzim bi-ymei ushpizin)

Reshet (TV channel), during Sukkot

The word *ushpizin* אושפיזין, an Aramaic word, means hosting, and *ishpuz* in a hospital is in fact a kind of hosting.

Hospitalization + hosting in a *sukkah* > hosting in hospital instead of in a *sukkah*.

15. Ushpizoom

https://bit.ly/20FEt2K

Council for the preservation of heritage sites-4-8.10.20

This expression is a clipped compound—joining two nouns together to create a new word: ushpiz + Zoom > *ushpizoom*, a pun.

Hosting + using Zoom > hosting on Zoom because of the ban on leaving the house.

16. Unprotected space—(merhav lo mugan)

Maariv, 5.10.20, Sukkot

Unprotected space is a deviation from the well-known bound collocation: "protected space" (*mamad*, residential protected space). During *Sukkot*, Israelis like to go on hikes, to be out in nature, but owing to corona they were warned not to do so, because the space is not protected from infection with the virus.

Sukkot +the danger of infection > whoever is careful remains in the *sukkah* and does not go walking in unprotected space.

Expressions and Puns in the Spirit of Simhat Torah and Shemini Atzeret

The last day of *Sukkot* is *Simhat Torah*, a celebration in song and dance, thanking God for the *Torah* he gave to the people of Israel. On the evening after this day, it is customary to hold second dances (*hakafot shniyot*) in which people continue to dance with *Torah* scrolls outside the synagogues.

17. Second adhesions (hadbakot shniyot)

Reshet (TV channel), eve of Simhat Torah

Deviation from the bound collocation: hakafot shniyot ("repeat encirclements"-ironic pun)

Simhat Torah + the spread of corona > the circular dancing creates the chain of infection.

18. Corona dance-(rikud hacorona)

Facebook, eve of Simhat Torah

The custom of dancing on the eve of *Simhat Torah* + the corona reality > *Simhat Torah* dancing continues the chain of infection (ironic pun—the dancing of Covid-19 virus).

19. Signing on Zoom-(itum be-zoom)

Ynet-https://www.ynet.co.il/judaism/article/r14Wyu3Iw-8.10.20

On *Hoshana Rabbah* it is customary to study *Torah* throughout the night, in the belief that on this night our final judgment is signed + learning on Zoom > the judgment will be signed thanks to digital learning.

20. A lot of corona—(corona raba)

Reshet (TV channel), eve of Simhat Torah

The eve of *Hosh'ana Raba* is the eve of *Simhat Torah*. It is so called because on *Simhat Torah* it is customary to read liturgical texts in which the refrain is "*hosh'ana*" (*hosh'a* + na = an appeal to God for deliverance). The meaning of the word *raba* is "a lot of", when many people read these many liturgical texts (ironic pun: a lot of corona viruses).

The bound collocation "corona raba" imitates the sounds of "Hosh'ana Raba".

Hosh'ana Raba + the rampaging corona pandemic > many people in the synagogues to recite many liturgical texts will lead to numerous infections with corona.

Conclusions

In September 2020, the Jewish festivals known as the *Tishrei* holidays were celebrated in the throes of coping with the corona pandemic. In Israel, as elsewhere, that coping was described and documented in headlines and statements in the press, while social media, with their regular news updates, proved to be fertile ground for the creation of puns and plays on words based on the language of religious sources and prayers. The research found 32 such creations, including quotations that underwent grammatical change and deviations from bound collocations. The article provides 20 neologisms and puns that create interesting connections between the festive atmosphere and the war on corona. In normal times, any grammatical change hints at a specific event, but this time the combinations were unique, and in which three meanings were found: the original

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meaning of the bound collocation echoing in the background, accompanied by two ideas that hint at both the holidays and the corona pandemic. This rhetoric is aimed at the second purpose of the title—the marketing purpose, which is intended to grab the reader's attention and make him read the text (Schlesinger, 2000, p. 142). These creations reflect a high level of linguistic awareness by the newspapers' copy editors and those who write posts in the social networks, and shed new light on this problematic period, at times ironic and amusing, other times raising questions of faith. Most of the language creations brought up in the print and virtual press and on social networks evoke associations related to religion and faith, while the ironic neologisms and puns were written only on social networks, where this kind of witty and humorous communication is popular on this platform. The article showed how these works are innovative, surprising, and sometimes also enjoyable, and create an ironic effect (Gadish et al., 2003, p. 35). Moreover, the phrases are more extensive and invite profound and complex thoughts.

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Appendix

Israel Hayom	Makor Rishon	Ynet	Networks	Other
ḥitanu le-fanekha 25.9	mi yunsham u-mi lo? 25.9	ḥitum be-zoom 8.10	rikud hacorona	Sukkah be-masekha (published in local papers—ad for an Internet game
ḥatum ve-sagur	ḥagim u-zminin (Bank Leumi advertisement)	ushpizoom (used widely in city ads)	hacorona ḥogeget be-ḥagei Tishrei	Shlomit is in distress. She won't forget to put a Zoom link for ushpizin (Revital Vitelson, stand-up comic)
mi ba-ḥuts u-mi bifnim?	Shana shel hasarat masekhot 18.9		Kol esarei ve-kunasei	
tefilat neʻilah (empty roads in the background)	le-ḥayim tovim, beri'im ule-shalom (ad)		Hadbakot shniyot	
hag hakorban (danger of death during the holiday)	shnat ha-zoom out		mitsvat hakhel bli le-hitkahel	
sukkat bri'utenu (2.9)	ve-samaḥta be-ḥayekha 9.10		corona raba	
shomea' tefilah 2.9			Ishpuzim bi-yemei ushpizin	
ve-samaḥta be-vetekha 5.10			be-kavod ve-lo be-vizui	
ve-yasem lanubri'ut 6.10			be-revaḥ ve-lo be-tsimtsum (on the prayers) sheʿat neʿilah (neʿilah	
			prayer and locking roads)	
			masekat sukkah	
			ḥibut ha-corona	
			ha-sukkah shelanu ptuḥa muzmanim le-hikanes	
9	6	2	13	2

32 Deviations from Bound Collocations During the Corona Pandemic and the *Tishrei* Holidays 2020^*

Note. * In the first, second, and third columns no dates are given in the squares where the dates are the same as above; the examples in the last two columns are from social networks and therefore no date has been written.