

Categories, templates, and other festive puzzles

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It's fairly obvious that the noun *syntax* existed before the noun *syntactician*. Most morphological theories would also capture this diachronic relationship synchronically, by taking the base *syntax* and deriving the form *syntactician* from it. But what about the noun *love* and verb *love*? What about *pérmít* and *permít*, or the nouns *hammer* and *tape*, or the nouns and verbs *hammer* and *tape*?

This talk aims to do a number of things, taking these questions as our starting point. I'll first survey various ways in which researchers have used phonological and semantic criteria to argue for a direction of derivation between two closely related forms like those above. I'll then introduce the notions of Root Augmentation and Affix Imposition, which Grestenberger and Kastner (2022) proposed in order to formalize different derivational strategies. Next we'll turn from categories to verbal templates in Semitic, establishing a link between the meaning of a root across categories and selectional restrictions (Hewett 2023), before looking at some cases in Hebrew in which derived forms seem to not have a base. While I won't have answers for all the questions we'll pose, the result should give us enough puzzles to last eight nights, maybe even an entire advent calendar.