Emphasis Path: Hebrew and Semitics

One of the most unique and exciting study possibilities within FAMES' four-year Middle Eastern Studies Hebrew degree is the Semitic language emphasis, which affords a student the opportunity to study—ab initio—the full range of Hebrew's historical phases—from Classical (Biblical), through Rabbinic and Medieval, all the way up to that of the early modern period and contemporary Israeli Hebrew—as well as several other cognate languages, among them Arabic, Akkadian, and Aramaic (with the possibility of Phoenician and Ugaritic, as well). The various pre-modern strata of Hebrew are studied on the basis of primary sources with an emphasis on close reading and grammar. This provides a solid linguistic foundation for the acquisition of Modern Israeli Hebrew, which is taught ulpan-style, i.e., immersively in Hebrew, and which, in turn, reinforces and gives added vitality to the learning of the more ancient forms of the language, since they share so much grammar and vocabulary. There are also classes dealing with culture and politics. Virtually unique to Cambridge, students who so desire also enjoy the possibility of working with genuine medieval Hebrew manuscripts under the personal tutelage of staff within the University Library's Genizah Research Unit. During their third year, students spend eight months in Israel, gaining fluency in Hebrew, conducting research for their undergraduate dissertation, and, should they wish, continuing with study of their other Semitic languages. The 'Hebrew and Semitics' emphasis track is, of course, excellent preparation for studying for more advanced degrees in Hebrew, Semitic, and related subjects (such as Bible, Religious Studies, Theology, Hebrew literature, linguistic, philology, history, and Middle Eastern Studies), but furnishing background in languages still spoken in the Near East, it is also immensely useful as preparation for jobs in foreign relations, diplomacy, development, translation, and journalism, as well as for work in non-profit and non-governmental organizations, experience which employers in all fields find attractive in prospective employees. Relative to the graduates of other universities and of other departments within the University of Cambridge, FAMES graduates consistently rank high in finding suitable employment in a variety of fields and/or being accepted into advanced degree courses after graduation.

NOTE: UNLESS STUDENTS PURSUING THE 'HEBREW AND SEMITICS' EMPHASIS PATH HAVE PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF HEBREW, THEY ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO LIMIT THEIR FIRST YEAR'S LANGUAGE LEARNING TO HEBREW ALONE AND TO WAIT UNTIL SUBSEQUENT YEARS TO BEGIN STUDYING OTHER SEMITIC LANGUAGES

Sample Course of Study

Year 1 (IA)

Required
Elementary Hebrew Language A (Classical) (MES.4)

Elementary Hebrew Language B (Modern Hebrew Language and Literature) (MES.5)

Additional courses (students must choose two additional papers), for example
Introduction to the History and Culture of Middle East (MES.6)

Contemporary Middle East (MES.7)
or any combination of two of the above and/or the following (provided that one of them is either MES.6 or MES.7; it is strongly recommended that a student begin with a single language, i.e., Hebrew, before taking on a second one):

Akkadian Language I (X.1); Egyptian Language I (X.2)

**Year 2 (IB)**

*Required*

Classical (Biblical) Hebrew Language and Literature (MES.13)

*and/or*

Modern Hebrew Language (MES.13)

*Additional courses (students must choose four additional papers), for example*

Elementary Arabic Language (MES.1)

Akkadian Language I (X.1)

Topics in Hebrew Studies (MES.18):

- Pre-modern Hebrew Literature (DSS, Rabbinic, Medieval)
- Aramaic Structures and Meanings (X.3 Linguistics)

*or any combination of four of the above and/or the following:*

Elementary Persian Language (MES.3); Special Topics in Hebrew Literature (MES.16); Formation of Islam (MES.17); The Formation of the Modern Middle East (MES.19)—The Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Israel; Life, Thought and Worship of Modern Judaism (X.4 Divinity); Introduction to Islam (X.5 Divinity); Sounds and Words (X.8 Linguistics); Language, brain and society (X.13 Linguistics); The Jewish presence in medieval society (X.14); Cinema East (AMES.1).

**Year 3: Year Abroad**

Minimum 8 months in Israel doing language learning and dissertation research.

**Year 4 (II)**

*Required*

Classical Hebrew Language (MES.33)

*and/or*

Modern Hebrew Language (MES.33)

*Additional courses (students must choose three additional papers), for example*

Advanced Hebrew Literature/History of Hebrew (MES.36)

- History of Hebrew

Comparative Semitics and/or Hebrew Vocalisation Traditions (MES.41)
and either

Intermediate Arabic Language (MES.11)

or

Akkadian Language II (X.6 Archaeology)

or any combination of three of the above and/or the following:

Intermediate Arabic Language (MES.11); Intermediate Persian Language (MES.12); Advanced Hebrew Literature/History of Hebrew (MES.36); History of the pre-modern Middle East: Iran under the Safavids (MES.37); History of the Modern Middle East: Language, National Identity, and Conflict (MES.38); Special Subject in the Pre-modern Middle East: Image and Text in Islamic Manuscripts (MES.39); Special Subject in the Contemporary Middle East (either MES.40A - Islamist Thought in the 20th-century Arab World or MES.40B); The Invention of Israel Elementary Sanskrit (MES.42); Elementary Hindi Language (MES.43); Judaism II (X.9 Divinity); Islam II (X.10 Divinity); Judaism and Philosophy (X.11 Divinity); The Jewish Presence in Medieval Society (X.14 Divinity)

AND

Undergraduate dissertation