

ASIAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES TRIPOS Part IB  
Middle Eastern Studies

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Monday 31 May 2010

09.00 - 12.00

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**MES.18 TOPICS IN HEBREW STUDIES**

Select **two** of the following three sections and answer **two** questions from each. All questions carry equal marks.

**STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS**

*20 page Answer Book x 1*

*A Rough Work Pad*

You may not start to read the questions  
printed on the subsequent pages of this  
question paper until instructed that you  
may do so by the Invigilator

### SECTION 1 (Genesis Proto-history)

1. “Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness.” Discuss this text against its ancient near eastern background.
2. Discuss the importance of the “tree of knowledge” and the “tree of life” in Genesis 2–3.
3. **EITHER:** In what ways does the story of Cain develop themes from the preceding Eden narrative?  
  
**OR:** How does the section on the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:1-3 relate to its context?
4. To what extent was polemic a factor in the writing of Genesis 1-11?

### SECTION 2 (History of the Hebrew language)

1. What is the background of the Tiberian vocalization system?
2. In what ways has recent research contributed to our knowledge of the pronunciation of the vowels and consonants in the Tiberian reading tradition of the Hebrew Bible?
3. Describe the distinctive features of the Babylonian tradition of vocalization and pronunciation.
4. Describe the distinctive features of the Palestinian tradition of vocalization and pronunciation.

### SECTION 3 (Modern Hebrew literature and literary theory)

1. Discuss Brenner’s ‘poetics of dislocation’ in his story ‘The Way Out’ as a literary device (referring to formalist aesthetics) and as an outcome of the encounter with the Land of Israel (referring to Marxist thought).
2. Discuss Chaim Hazaz’s ‘The Sermon’ as a text that resists interpretation in the light of Roland Barthes’ ‘The death of the Author’.
3. Discuss the representation of the Land of Israel and the Arab prisoner in S. Yizhar’s ‘The Prisoner’.
4. Discuss the way life in the Land of Israel and the Zionist settlements in Palestine are presented as a major change in Jewish history in Brenner’s ‘The Way Out’ and Chaim Hazaz’s ‘The Sermon’.

**END OF PAPER**