

**GCSE**

**Biblical Hebrew**

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J196**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2017**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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### Biblical Hebrew (J196)

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## A201 Language

### General Comments:

Overall the paper was dealt with competently by candidates, with the usual range of responses anticipated.

There were two features of Biblical Hebrew that occurred in this year's paper, and many candidates appeared unfamiliar with them:

- 1) Comparison: In Q1 paragraph 2 'Iyov was greater than...' was translated by many as 'Iyov was great from all...'
- 2) Oaths: The  $\text{לֹא אֶלֶם} / \text{אֶלֶם}$  form of conditional oaths was often not recognised or understood. Candidates often wrote 'If I will lie to you...'

In both the above instances, these forms are regular features of Biblical Hebrew prose, and greater emphasis should be placed on recognising them.

A further point: If a candidate writes: 'Iyov was greater from all the people', what does that mean in English? What does it mean to be 'great from'? Candidates should be trained to write things that make sense in their spoken language, not to translate blindly word by word.

There are many examples of how candidates don't try to make sense of the literal translation; among others: Q1 para 4 line 12: 'they smote the lads according to the sword'. What does that mean? When was the last time anyone used the word 'smote' in their normal speech? And what does it mean to 'smote according to the sword'?

What is happening here is the candidate can translate each word, and even string them together, but they don't feel obliged to then really understand what they are writing and go to the next step of making the translation meaningful and intelligible in today's language.

Teachers should emphasise the need to make real sense of what they are reading, and to transfer that into a flowing, idiomatic translation.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

The following are the points which were most commonly not understood:

Q1: Grid sheet:

תִּשְׁבֵּר : The Pi'el form meaning 'smash'

תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּהוּ : In the passage this verb appears with a negative. Candidates may write 'you shall (not) bow down'; however, the verb must be fully translated, it is not adequate to write 'bow down'.

Q1 (b) Para 1:

This paragraph had many examples of the perfect tense with a Vav Consecutive used conversively. This is a helpful passage for future reference to demonstrate the different forms of the use of this Vav.

Q2 (c) The conditional form of the oath was a complex feature of this question. Refer to comments above.

(e)(i) : כִּבְשׂוֹת הַצֹּאן are lambs.

(h)(i) This point was mostly not achieved: most candidates did not recognise the implied definite article.

(h)(ii) It is not enough to write: 'Vav conversive', as the 'conversive' vowel is different in perfect and imperfect verbs. Candidates needed to note that it is the vav conversive in conjunction with an imperfect verb that attracts this vowel.

(j)(i) מצבה is a monument, not a gravestone.

(j)(ii) גל is a heap / pile, not a circle

(l)(i)&(ii) The conditional form of the oath was a complex feature of this question. Refer to comments above.

(q) It is important to train candidates not to simply list the events in the passages. Candidates should be trained to extrapolate and interpret the information in the passages.

For example: 'Abraham made a peace covenant with Abimelech': this is not adequate, as it simply states the event, with no comment or insight.

For example: 'Abraham made a peace treaty with Abimelech concerning the future of their descendants. This shows that covenants made by ancestors were expected to be respected by descendants.' This is a good inference, and a valid point.

## A202 Literature

### General Comments

As usual there was quite a range of marks and standards of response to the questions. Some candidates had been well prepared and scored top marks.

The examiners would like to point out that if candidates need extra space they must ask for extra paper and not scribble all over random parts of their exam paper. Only a scan of the answer to each question is seen, not a copy of the whole paper.

- 1a (i) Well answered
- 1a (ii) Many candidates focused on the imperfect prefix  $\chi$  and not on the vowel underneath.
- 1b One mark was awarded for the basic translation and only one point of explanation was required. Most candidates did well on this question.
- 1c Some candidates answered this correctly, though some merely wrote 'north' whilst others drew a map with Haran somewhere in the region of Egypt. As with last year's exam, the examiners wish to suggest that the teaching of the material should include where places are and any relevant historical data.
- 1d Well answered
- 1e Well answered although some candidates confused Elon Moreh (which is in the region of Shechem) with Elon Mamre (which is in Hebron).
- 1f Some candidates confused this with a similar phrase from Chapter 13 and wrote here the explanation that was pertinent only later on.
- 1g (i) Some translated  $\text{אל מקדם לבית אל}$  as 'from the east to Bethel' whereas the correct translation was 'from the east of Bethel'.
- 1g (ii) Those who just wrote 'ים means sea' were not awarded a mark as there was no reference to the Mediterranean Sea being situated to the west of Canaan.
- 1h Some candidates translated  $\text{ויכל}$  as 'he was able' and  $\text{מקנת כספו}$  as 'the cattle he bought for money'. The context of the passage makes it evident that  $\text{מקנת}$  has nothing to do with livestock!
- 1i Well answered although some wrote 'Hiphil'.
- 1j Well answered
- 1k Many candidates answered this correctly. Some however wrote 'to make up for the missing definite article'.
- 1l Well answered
- 2a Well answered
- 2b Most scored well on this question but there were a few minor errors that could contribute collectively to a mark being lost. E.g. the pluperfect of  $\text{וה}$

וּבְרָכּוֹ and the Niphal of אָמַר.

- 2c Most candidates responded well to this question. However many did not understand that Abraham is praised for commanding his children to follow G-d's ways – and wrote responses like 'he follows G-d's ways' or 'his children follow G-d's ways', which is not the same thing.
- 2d Most candidates scored at least one mark.
- 2e Again minor errors were detected: no recognition of the hé interrogative or of the possessive hé of הַכְצַעְקָתָהּ.
- 2f Well answered
- 2g Most were awarded at least four out of five. Some did not recognise the idiom of comparison 'like righteous, like wicked' meaning that the righteous might be treated the same as the wicked.  
Some candidates did not take their answers from the line references and instead listed later parts of the text e.g. Abraham reducing the number of righteous people – this did not gain marks.
- 2h Some struggled to find two points of contrast. Others misread the question and gave lengthy explanations why G-d changed his reply from 'I will not destroy' to 'I will not do'.
- 2i Many did well on this question although some candidates just pointed out the full *patach* before the guttural without mentioning the regular *chataf-patach* before a non-guttural. Since there were two marks available one had to write both points.
- 2j (i) Some just wrote 'infinitive construct' and others just 'Lamed-hé verb'. One needed both for the mark.  
Other candidates had no awareness at all of the function of the ת.
- 2j (ii) Well answered
- 3a Well answered
- 3b Some candidates did not know that the Hiphil of the root חָזַק means 'to take hold of'.
- 3c Well answered
- 3d Most candidates received at least one mark.
- 3e Well answered by most candidates, though some said that Asahel was invited to kill one of Avner's men which is not true.
- 3f Well answered
- 3g Many candidates gave imprecise answers such as 'tell your men to stop chasing their brothers'.

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- 3h Well answered
- 3i Not many candidates recognised the pluperfect.
- 3j(i) and (ii) Well answered
- 3k Some had incomplete answers e.g. בגד כפת (but did not say 'at the start of a word' or 'after a silent sheva').
- 4a (i) Most candidates received at least four marks.
- 4a (ii) Very few understood the ן was negative / privative.
- 4a (iii) 'Missing letter' was accepted but 'missing letter hé' was not.
- 4a (iv) Well answered though to gain two marks one had to make reference to a Hebrew derivation e.g. שפר 'beautiful'.
- 4b Well answered.
- 4c Well answered.
- 4d Well answered
- 4e Some candidates wrote 'Ziva' or 'David'.
- 4f Well answered
- 4g (i) Many did not realise the yud was the sign of a plural noun (here the majestic plural).
- 4g (ii) Well answered though some candidates just wrote 'future prefix'.
- 4h (i) Many wrote that it was seemingly pointless for Mefibosheth to eat what Ziva provided and then again at the palace. This question could have equally been asked on David's instructions above. The question here touched on the seeming contradiction of whose table Mefibosheth was supposed to eat at.
- 4h (ii) Those who answered with a comment that followed on from what was written above still received the mark.
- 5a Well answered
- 5b Some candidates struggled with this question. Either a basic factual answer or a homiletic answer was accredited.
- 5c Most received one mark for 'Israel' but failed to mention that it had been promised to them (by G-d).
- 5d Well answered
- 5e Most candidates did not know the meaning of part of the verb.
- 5f Many candidates answered this question most ably but some were obviously not taught the meaning of derivation. This is a common exam question in Paper 2.
- 5g Most candidates did well on this question.



- 5h Some mistranslated הרב הרב 'did he do many things' or similar. Others did not realise that אם ... ה is the classic construction of a question with more than one possibility ("Did he ... or did he ...") Some candidates did not realise that ובנותיה [lit. daughters] here meant suburbs.
- 5i Mostly well answered; some wrote 'a town'.
- 5j Most candidates scored two marks.
- 5k A number of candidates merged the last two clauses and wrote, "... And I will offer it as burnt-offering to the L-rd," rather than "... it will belong to the L-rd and I will offer it as a burnt-offering." Some merely transliterated 'olah' which was considered a major error.
- 5l Credit was given for any grammatical feature of the word.
- 5m Most people answered this well though as mentioned before, it is important for centres to teach the map of the area and where the main countries and cities are situated.
- 6a Well answered
- 6b Well answered
- 6c Well answered
- 6d Admittedly the line references as printed were not the intended ones so credit was given for any information in lines 4-7.
- 6e Many candidates ignored the Lamed prefix and gave the incorrect answer: 'Who is this girl?'
- 6f Well answered
- 6g Well answered in general, although some candidates again told the narrative without paying attention to the line references, and did not gain credit for points taken from outside these lines.
- 6h Generally well answered but to gain marks for writing 'hidden' or 'dumb', one had to write the root in Hebrew too.
- 6i Some candidates confused שיבתך 'your old age' with שביעתך 'your satisfaction'. Others mistranslated אהבתך as 'whom you love'.
- 6j Some candidates offered a range of wrong conjugations and roots.
- 6k A large number of candidates correctly wrote 'nunnation' or 'noun form' but then spoiled their answer by adding 'for emphasis'.
- 6l On the whole well answered but some candidates wrote 'you plural' which is grammatically correct elsewhere but not in this context.

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