

Biblical Hebrew

Advanced GCE H417

Advanced Subsidiary GCE H017

OCR Report to Centres

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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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F191 Translation, Comprehension and Literature

General Comments

The examiners are pleased to report that the standard of knowledge and evaluation was generally high. These remarks are offered with the hope that they will be a help for future candidates in achieving a high standard.

Question 1: Unprepared Translation and Comprehension

All candidates were required to answer this question and were generally well prepared for the challenge.

- (a) Well answered.
- (b) The translation was generally of a high standard. The verb להקטיר in association with its cognate noun was not always appreciated. The use of verbs and nouns with the same verbal stem, used in conjunction with each other are a common feature in Biblical Hebrew.
Wide latitude was given for the verb יעצר (line 6).
The verb לפתח in association with the noun פתוחים (line 8) caused difficulty to some candidates. The verb פתח in the *piel* often means to 'engrave' and is not uncommon in Biblical Hebrew.
- (c) The question was only answered in full by a minority of candidates. See the Mark Scheme for full treatment.
- (d) (i) and (ii) There were many good attempts at these questions. From the context it was obvious that the reference was to a food product and almost all candidates appreciated that the quotation referred to wheat; but did not always make the next step of associating the noun מכות with the root נכה. (See the Mark Scheme for full treatment).
- (e) Well answered.
- (f) (i) Many candidates scored 2 of the 3 marks. Candidates were only expected to point out the problem but it was not necessary to solve it.
- (g) Some candidates restricted their response to the quotation in line 18, but were not penalised for this. Others used this as a base for their answer and cited examples from lines 19–20. Either approach was acceptable.
- (h) Well answered.

Questions 2-4: Literature Set Texts

Question 2

The responses were of a good standard.

- (a) and (b) (i) Well answered.
- (b) (ii) Some candidates claimed that the elative nouns are used for emphasis. Examiners draw attention to Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar p. 429 footnote 1 '... these forms are, however, used without any perceptible emphasis'. Perhaps candidates meant that they are used in a comparative or superlative sense.

(c) and (d) Well answered.

(e) Sometimes candidates merely cited the verses where the noun קרי appeared. The question specifically asked 'how' the noun is utilised. (See the Mark Scheme for full treatment).

(f) The use of numbers in Biblical Hebrew is seemingly not well understood. For a full treatment see the Mark Scheme.

(g) Generally well answered.

Question 3

The responses were of a good standard.

(a) Credit could not be given merely for the action of the Philistines/Plishtim in the set text. Historical background information is always expected in Set Texts.

(b), (c), (d) and (e) (i) Generally well answered.

(e) (ii) Well prepared candidates correctly understood that the Divine Oracle was attached to the priestly vestment.

(f) (i) The best solutions were those that indicated the *piel* conjugation. (See the Mark Scheme.)

(ii) It should be noted that the *piel* can indicate causation.

Question 4

The responses were of a good standard.

(a) and (b) Generally well answered.

(c) Some candidates cited the negative preposition לבלתי as the Infinite Construct. As a help for the future, the examiners would advise that the Infinite Constructs should be considered as gerunds (verbal nouns). This would lead to less confusion.

(d) For a full treatment see the Mark Scheme.

(e) Well answered.

(f) (i) Generally understood.

(ii) The idea that a *dagesh* follows a short vowel prior to a long one is an observation which is true on many occasions. However, one cannot negate the more fundamental reason for a *dagesh* in many instances, especially when there is either a letter missing or a letter implied. (See the Mark Scheme for a full treatment.)

(g) Where candidates merely quoted the verses in which the noun דרור occurred, credit could not be given. The question specifically asks candidates to show how the prophet used irony.

(h) (i) Generally well understood.

(ii) See Mark Scheme for full treatment.

- (i) Well answered.
- (j) Generally well answered.

General Conclusions

In order to help future candidates it should be pointed out that there were instances where perhaps study notes were seemingly regurgitated. This meant that, occasionally, insufficient attention being paid to the rubric of the question, e.g. questions 2(b)(ii), 2(e), 4(d) where sometimes a translation was offered instead of a linguistic observation. This was also noted in the Set Text summative questions where there were instances where the information offered was not tailored to the set question. This does not detract from the fact that there were many high scoring candidates who were well prepared.

F192 Translation, Comprehension, Composition and Literature

General Comments

Most candidates were well prepared for this specification and on occasions their responses reflected linguistic talent. The examiners offer these remarks in the hope that they will help future candidates achieve a high standard.

Unprepared Translation and Comprehension

All candidates are required to answer this question.

Question 1

(a) and (b) Well answered.

(c) Most candidates faced the challenge of an unprepared translation very well. The verb הנייהת (line 5) is *Kal* although some candidates understood the verb in the causative sense 'producing life' (*sic*). The Divine Name can be variously translated but the transliteration 'Hashem' (the Name) is not really acceptable. There was no loss of credit however. The noun גדים (sinews - line 8) produced variant translations all of which were allowed.

(d) and (e) Generally well answered.

(f) The verb יחפ (line 14) was often recognised as an Imperative but the feminine gender was missed by many candidates.

(g) Was generally poorly answered. For a full treatment see the Mark Scheme. It was often confused with a non-existent *hiphil* verb.

(h) Most candidates scored 2 on this question. The intention of the prophet to reverse the common perception 'our hope has perished' (line 17) was often missed.

(i) Pointing

Nearly all candidates scored 2 in this question. The correct version occurs in the Mark Scheme. However all possible renderings were allowed, e.g. the verb יטמא is *hithpael* but a *piel* rendering was considered acceptable.

The euphonic *dagesh* in nouns such as גלוליהם was often missed. Similarly, the *hataf pathah* in אשר and עליהם was also missed. Nouns formed from a geminate root often require a *dagesh* in the second radical e.g. חקתי.

It is considered advisable that candidates should pay close attention to the spelling, pointing, structure of words and phrases within the Set Texts. This will certainly help when answering this question.

Question 2

All candidates were required to answer this question and generally scored at least half marks in transcribing the passage into Biblical Hebrew. In almost all cases there was an appreciation of the Biblical Hebrew style. There were a few good attempts where candidates scored highly in this question. It is appreciated that this is certainly considered a difficult question by many candidates.

Set Texts: Questions 3–5

Candidates are required to answer two questions in this section.

Question 3

Generally a well answered question.

- (a) (i) and (ii) It is recommended that any standard Biblical atlas is useful for Set Text studies. It was not considered sufficient to answer 'Northern Israel' for (ii).
- (b), (c) and (d) Well answered.
- (e) (i) Few candidates appreciated that words are used in parallel in Biblical Hebrew. (See the Mark Scheme for details.)
(ii) Well answered.
- (f) Well answered.
- (g) There were various approaches in answering this question. Candidates used historical, geographical and linguistic approaches. The answers were diverse. (See the Mark Scheme for possibilities.)
Merely translating the citation without explanation was ineffective in this context.

Question 4

A well answered question.

- (a) A minority of candidates misunderstood the noun גואל, in its Levitical sense as referring to a purchaser of property or a legal protector of the deceased. In this context, Isaiah is using the noun in a wider context.
- (b) (i) Well answered.
(ii) See the Mark Scheme for the correct approach.
- (c) Candidates did not always appreciate that the prophet emphasised the need for focus on social issues.
- (d) The contrast between outward behaviour and inner devotion was not always appreciated.
- (e) Well answered.
- (f) Generally well answered.
- (g) The root was often known whereas the conjugation was less well known.
- (h) Well answered.

Question 5

Generally a well answered question.

- (a) to (c) Well answered.
- (d) A minority of candidates referred to the themes in lines 4 to 6. This rarely answered the question, which was focused on the variant systems of poetical parallelism, which is clearly referred to in the question.

- (e) Well answered.
- (f) Translating the noun שׂוֹר in the context of lines 11–13 was rarely effective. Many correctly noted that in lines 11 to 12, it introduces the apodosis in a conditional sentence. Few candidates realised that in line 13 it was being used as an ethical admonition or advice.
- (g) Generally well answered. Few commented on the poetical build up, e.g. the double use of לוֹלֵי (lines 2–3) and the treble use of אָזִי (lines 4–6).
- (h) It was noted *supra* (question 1 (i)) that nouns formed from a geminate root require a *dagesh* in the second radical. The idea that a *dagesh* follows a short vowel prior to a long one is an observation which is true on many occasions. However one cannot negate the more fundamental reason for a *dagesh* in many instances; especially when there is either a letter missing or a letter implied.
- (i) Generally well answered. Few realised that human and physical resources were considered an essential element by the populace in Biblical society.

Essays: Questions 6–8

Candidates are only required to answer one question in this section. Since the responses are marked according to content and quality (see Mark Scheme) it would be helpful if candidates were to assemble their responses in historical sequence, where relevant.

Question 6

All candidates were able to explain their ideas at varying levels. Almost all focused on the exploits of either Deborah or Gideon to demonstrate that they had control over various tribes but never over the entire region. There was little focus on how the established alliances were maintained and few focused on the evidence in the so-termed ‘Song of Deborah’, or Gideon’s refusal to accept kingship.

Question 7

Very few candidates attempted this question. Those who selected this question produced work which was, generally, of a high standard.

Question 8

This was a popular question. Some candidates spent a long time dealing with the technicalities of the superscription, without specifically applying the details to the Psalms in question. Others listed copious citations but not necessarily connecting them directly with the set question. Despite this, generally, a well answered question.

Summary

There are candidates who have, at least, a good grasp of Biblical Hebrew morphology. However, it is felt that this knowledge should be deepened in order for candidates to appreciate fully the texts that they study. This would certainly help with linguistic based questions (referred to *supra*) and specifically to questions 1(i) and 2.

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