

GCE

Biblical Hebrew

Advanced GCE **H417**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **H017**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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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. There were a few responses that were ambiguous and therefore it proved difficult to award an appropriate mark. The examiners would emphasise that clear presentation and accurate expression is expected at this level and include these remarks with the hope that they will be a help for future candidates in achieving a high standard.

A distinction of approach is made in the paper between unprepared texts for which the candidate has not specifically prepared and the Biblical Set Texts. Although accuracy is expected in the former, there is a degree of latitude which is implicit when assessing the 'transfer of meaning.' The study of Biblical Set Texts implies a higher demand on the candidate, in as far, as the Biblical Text selected should be studied at the appropriate level. Both the nuances of language and an accurate appreciation of the historical background are taken into account when setting the examination.

The aim is that the linguistic knowledge and accuracy of reading the prepared Biblical texts in the original will give confidence to candidates to tackle 'unprepared texts' both in preparation for the examination and as a result, under examination conditions. Certainly, there is evidence that this aim is being achieved.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1: Unprepared Translation and Comprehension.

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

(a), (b) and (c) generally presented no problems for the majority of candidates.

(d) Many good attempts were recorded. However some candidates failed to appreciate that Jephtach/Yiftach asked a rhetorical question when he asked 'Why have you come to me at this moment of time?' (line 6)

(e) Some candidates failed to appreciate that Jephtach/Yiftach wanted Divine approval for his actions and it was this concern that motivated him.

(f) The comment for part (e) is similarly appropriate in this question.

(g) (i) The translation was generally of a high standard. The use of the *nifal* in line 14 was not always understood and the phrase מכה גדולה (line 14) was invariably translated poorly (see the Mark Scheme). Line 17 was more difficult than the preceding paragraph. This is based on the principle of the examination gradually progressing in difficulty and thus differentiating.

(g) (i) Generally well answered.

(g)(iii) This was a demanding question and was tackled well by the higher scoring candidates, There were some good attempts that elicited 1 mark.

(h) Most candidates failed to realise the respect shown by the daughter of Jephtach/Yiftach. (See Mark Scheme)

(i) Most candidates obtained the easier of the 2 marks. The second point was aimed at the higher scoring candidates

Questions 2-4: Literature Set Texts.

Question 2 was answered by a minority of candidates. The responses were generally of a good standard.

(a) Some candidates did not seem to appreciate that the Biblical text was referring to the Biblical land of Ancient Israel.

(b) (i) The translation was not always competent. The first four words of line 5 seemingly proved difficult albeit that this is a set text. Possibly there were candidates relying on their residual knowledge of the Pentateuch to tackle this question.

(b) (ii) Well answered.

(c) (i) The phrase גאל הדם was met with difficulty (although this was prepared set-text translation). A working definition could be 'a legal advocate representing the deceased.'

(d) (e) (f) Well answered, although there was often unnecessary repetition.

(g) Candidates tended to wander beyond the confines of the set text. This underpins the comment to question (b)(i)

Question 3 was a popular question.

(a) (b) were well answered.

(c) Candidates did not always appreciate that Samuel/Shmuel was insisting that once Saul/Shaul had accepted the position as king, he was duty bound to be restricted by the Corpus of Law. This may well involve making difficult moral decisions.

(d) The grammatical principle was generally well understood. However the application was less appreciated. [See Mark Scheme]

(e) (i) The translation was generally of a good standard. The first seven words of the sentence starting in line 14 did prove difficult. The examiners accepted variances.

(e) (ii) The letter ך has many uses in Biblical Hebrew. This was not always appreciated. See Mark Scheme.

(e) (iii) Few appreciated that the reference was to household gods or fetishes.

(f) Well answered

(g) There was a tendency to summarise the Biblical narrative. A few candidates included material which involved the relationship between David and Jonathan which was outside the scope of this question. All the points made should be comprehensible and convincing to gain due credit.

Question 4 was also a popular question, which was generally well answered.

(a) and (b) were well answered.

(c) (i) The translation was generally of a high standard. Only a limited number of candidates appreciated that RavShakeh was contrasting (from his point of view) the 'verbosity' of the Judean authorities with the practicality of the emerging Assyrian authority.

(c) (ii) Some candidates, unnecessarily parsed this word. It was contextual and the comment on 3(d) is applicable here.

(c) (iii) Well answered. The answer 'adjective' in itself was not considered sufficient for credit.

(d) (i) and (ii) Well answered. The name Ravshakeh does not imply that he was a drunkard. Popular etymology cannot be taken seriously in examinations.

(e) and (f) were well answered.

(g) The majority of candidates wrote a good response to this question. The higher scoring candidates also indicated some of the minor Biblical criticisms of Hezekiah/Yechizkiyahu which showed foresight.

F192 Translation, Comprehension, Composition and Literature

General Comments

Most candidates were well prepared for this specification and on occasions their responses reflected linguistic talent. It must be emphasised that accurate expression and legible presentation is expected. On those occasions where responses did not meet this demand, it could prove difficult to award an appropriate mark.

There are candidates who have 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 (e.g. questions 1(f) and (i) and especially 2)

The examiners include these remarks in the hope that they will help future candidates achieve this high standard.

As in the AS examination there is distinction of approach between unprepared texts and the Biblical Set Texts. Although accuracy is expected in the former, there a wider degree of latitude is implicit when assessing the 'transfer of meaning.' In addition the study of Biblical Set Texts at A2 level imposes a higher demand on the candidate, in as far as the selected Biblical Texts include a more demanding level of Biblical poetry. An appreciation of both the accurate nuances of language and the historical background are taken into account when setting the examination.

The aim is that the combined level of grammatical structure and fluency of reading the prepared Biblical texts in the original will give confidence to candidates to tackle texts which they may not have encountered before. Certainly, there is evidence that this aim is being achieved.

Most certainly, Question 2, translating into Biblical Hebrew is a challenging exercise .It often reflects how successfully candidates have absorbed the nuances of the Hebrew Bible.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Unprepared Translation and Comprehension

All candidates are required to answer **Question 1**.

Question 1

(a) and (b) Well answered. The noun צִוּן (north) eluded some candidates.

(c) Many candidates faced the challenge of an unprepared translation well.

The noun בְּאֵן (line 4) means 'declaration.' Some candidates mistranslated this as a verb The Divine Name can be variously translated but the transliteration 'Hashem' (the Name) is not really acceptable.

However there was no loss of credit. Based on the principle of differentiated response, lines 7 and 8 were more difficult than the preceding three lines. The examiners were flexible in accepting variant translations, all of which were allowed.

(d) Some candidates only offered a very bland response e.g. 'G-d can wield power in the same way a potter can manipulate his clay ' and thus only one mark could be awarded. However the question demanded three points. [See Mark Scheme]

(e) Well answered.

(f) The verb חנַם can appear in both the *piel* and *nifal*. Here it is the latter. This was a more challenging question, purposely so.

(g) Was generally well answered. There were many interesting responses. Candidates should be aware that merely citing evidence without comment scores poorly.

(h) A more difficult question but there were many good attempts.

(i) **Pointing**

Nearly all candidates scored at least 2 in this question. The definitive version occurs in the Mark Scheme. However all possible renderings were allowed e.g. the verb יוקטרו appears in the *piel* but other renderings were allowed as 'a benefit of the doubt'. The use of the *hataf-patah* was often not appreciated.

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: Composition

All candidates were required to answer this question and generally scored at least 9/15 marks in transcribing the passage into Biblical Hebrew. In almost all cases there was an appreciation of the Biblical Hebrew style.

A minority of candidates reverted to mishnaic Hebrew and on one occasion to 'Yiddish'. There were few excellent 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) Well answered.

(b) (i) The set text translation was generally competent. Some candidates translated the noun מְשִׁיחָם as 'borders'. It may well be that they were using a Hebrew text where the diacritical dot on the ש was on the left. The examiners found one Bible published in the United States that translates in this way and it was allowed. See Mark Scheme for full treatment. Line 12 was subject to various interpretations. The examiners were flexible in accepting the variant translations, all of which were allowed.

The verb גִּיּוּר (line 13) was invariably translated in the second person. Of course it is third person.

(b) (ii) As per the comment *supra*, the response was judged depending on the translation offered in part (i). The dual form was not always recognised.

(c) Well answered.

(d) Few appreciated that the noun אִיב means 'founding father of'. It is probable that the use of the *hataf-patah* was often not appreciated. [see q1 (i) *supra*]

(e) Generally well handled for a more difficult question.

Merely translating the citation without explanation was ineffective in this context.

(f) A very well answered question. The responses were varied and interesting.

Question 4

A well answered question by a minority of candidates.

The examiners will restrict their observations to part (c) and (f)

(c) Candidates did not recognise the noun formation [See Mark Scheme for full treatment].

(f) A more difficult question which should be seen in the context of a Set Text. [See Mark Scheme for full treatment.]

Question 5

Generally a well answered question. (a) (i) and (ii) Well answered.

(b) There were many good attempts. The contrast, as required by the question, was sometimes just implicit but not accentuated.

(c) The grammatical referents were well understood. (d) Well answered.

(e) Many candidates answered this question from the meta-ethical viewpoint and appreciated that the word 'good' is understood differently in variant social settings. Others tackled the question from the aspect of how the word 'good' can be used as both a noun and adjective depending on the context. All approaches gained appropriate credit.

(f) (i) Well answered.

(f) (ii) In order to gain the mark, candidates needed to be exact by indicating the elided τ . 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. In this instance it is because a geminate root requires a *dagesh* in the second radical.

(g) Generally well attempted. Few realised that the noun τ is implicit in the second phrase. In Biblical Hebrew a word used in one phrase is often carried forward by implicit parallelism to the second phrase.

(h) Well answered

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 understood, from the Biblical perspective, the source of their authority. Some candidates pointed out the negative attitudes of Abimelech and Gael which was a good balance.

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. However some candidates listed well practised quotations without sufficient comment. This tends to attract a relatively low mark. The phrase 'reality of life ' was widely interpreted and that was the intention.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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Head office
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Facsimile: 01223 552553

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