

GCE

Biblical Hebrew

Advanced GCE **H417**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **H017**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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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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CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Biblical Hebrew (H417)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Biblical Hebrew (H017)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Content	Page
F191 Translation, Comprehension and Literature	4
F192 Translation, Comprehension, Composition and Literature	6

F191 Translation, Comprehension and Literature

PART 1: General Comments:

The AS Level is intended as a step up from the GCSE in preparation for the A2. At this level, candidates are expected to use idiomatic translation, and to demonstrate an appreciable use of variety in vocabulary. Candidates are also expected to show that they can form opinions and support those with proof from the text. This is a lead up to the full essay in the A2 Level, but not as demanding.

PART 2: Comments on Individual Questions:

Overall, candidates responded well to all aspects of the exam. This report will highlight those questions or points that are noteworthy, and will provide a teaching aid for the future.

Question No 1:

(a) This question is always an easier opening question. Many candidates wrote 'Why have you come up **to us**', thus mistranslating עָלֵינוּ. Some candidates translated this as 'Why have you come up **on us**'. Candidates should be taught an appreciation of Biblical idiom, and that 'עלה על' has the meaning of approaching for war.

(b) Overall, candidates demonstrated a good standard in translating these unseen passages. Some noteworthy points:

בִּי should be translated as 'in case / lest you harm me', not 'lest you touch me'.

לֹא נִמְיָתִיךְ: to receive the full marks for this phrase, candidates are required to recognise the infinitive absolute and add the appropriate emphasis in their translation.

(e) Candidates provided original responses here, among others: פִּשְׁתִּים and פִּלְשִׁתִּים. Examiners are pleased when candidates respond with innovative insights into the text.

Question No 2:

(b) אֲשֵׁי ה' refers to the portions from the offerings, whereas וְנִחְלָתוֹ refers to the tithes from the agricultural produce.

(c) מִשְׁפַּט הַכֹּהֲנִים does not mean the judgement, rather their rights as upheld by the law, or the laws that apply to them.

(d) This was one question which was disappointingly answered by the majority of candidates. This phrase is incomprehensible when translated simply, and so it would be expected that some reference to a commentary, or other reasonable explanation would be provided. There are many possible explanations for this phrase, but for candidates to simply translate at this level is surprising.

One possible explanation is 'they will eat equal portions' i.e. of sacrifices pertaining to the festivals. 'Besides for that which their ancestors sold' is a possible reference to the division into rotas for Temple service, and thus each rota forfeits its share of the non-festival sacrifices, as agreed by the ancestral division.

As noted, this is one possible approach, but such an incomprehensible phrase must be accompanied by an appropriate comment.

(e) Translating and justifying a translation is an important element of Biblical study. This question aims to solidify the skill of seeing the correlation between nouns and verbs, and between words and concepts, which is a significant element of the Biblical Hebrew language.

(i) Candidates are expected to make a point that relates to the title, and show some support for that point. Quotations from the set text are the sign of an A grade. Good use of the English language, and appropriate grammar and punctuation also play a part in the proper presentation of thoughts and ideas.

Question No 3:

(e) Many candidates recognised the Polel conjugation, but were unable to accurately identify the usage of this conjugation. In this case, it refers not to 'killing', but to 'striking the final blow' or 'finishing off'.

(f) (iii) This question requires background information, which should always be taught to candidates as part of their training. The background information here regards the consulting of the oracle 'Urim Ve'Tumim' in the breastplate of the High Priest. Ideally this requires the presence of the Ark. So 'Saul wished to consult the oracle, in the presence of the Ark', would be the correct response for both marks. Candidates who responded by noting that he wished to know the future, or he wished to consult G-d, received only one of the two marks.

Question No 4:

(e) אל מלך אשור: Many candidates noted correctly that this should be translated as, 'So says G-d about the Assyrian king', rather than 'to the Assyrian king'.

F192 Translation, Comprehension, Composition and Literature

PART 1: General Comments:

At A2 Level, candidates are expected to be competent in translating from a wide range of Biblical Texts, and to have a very well developed sense of the Biblical grammar and syntax, as well as an appreciation of historical context inferred from the texts. Candidates should have developed their skills in formulating and expressing opinions and insights into the texts they have studied, and to be able to refer to those texts by way of quotations in their essay.

It is disappointing when centres place emphasis on some aspects of the syllabus and neglect others. Some centres place little or no emphasis on the English to Hebrew section, or the vowelising of a blank text. If the centre is teaching their candidates with the aim of passing the exam with a respectable grade, they may choose to miss these out and achieve the grade by focusing on the other elements of the syllabus. However, this syllabus is designed to equip candidates with the full range of skills for a solid grounding in Biblical study, and these skills are developed and enhanced immeasurably by practice in the aforementioned areas. Candidates should be prepared for a future in Biblical appreciation and further study, not simply for achieving a grade in this examination.

PART 2: Comments on Individual Questions:

Overall, candidates responded well to all aspects of the exam. This report will highlight those questions or points that are noteworthy, and will provide a teaching aid for the future.

Question No 1:

(b) Candidates approached this unprepared translation with maturity, and demonstrated a good understanding of the poetic style in this passage.

(g) Examiners were pleased that candidates gave many varied and interesting suggestions in response to this.

(j) See comments in the General remarks.

Question No 2:

See comments in the General remarks.

Question No 3:

This question was very well answered in most parts by the majority of candidates.

(d) Some candidates did not recognise that the Mil-ra accent identifies this Vav as being used conversively. Candidates offered suggestions such as: The accent gives this a rhetorical inflection, 'Should I then...', which shows an appreciation for the style and tone of the speaker, but is not correct nonetheless.

(g) Many candidates recognised the connection to 'vulture', but gave implausible translations, such as 'he chased – as a vulture chases its prey'. In actual fact, vultures swoop down on their prey, usually dead carcasses. So possibly – 'he attacked them' or 'he confronted them'. The translation and the justification must follow each other logically.

(h) The majority of candidates recognised the form of the oath introduced with the words וַיִּשְׁבַּח .

Question No 4:

Candidates answered this question well in all respects. The selection from Psalms is always a popular choice for the prescribed texts, as it offers a real development of poetic appreciation, as well as an appreciation of the nuances of the Biblical language.

(i) Most candidates gave both possible derivations for this verb, which is impressive.

Question No 5:

(a) Candidates offered a variety of suggestions, such as: 'the prophet carries his mission as a burden imposed in him by G-d'.

(c) This question was well answered, with most candidates recognising the derivation 'look', and adding to that the context of 'looking for support', hence 'her hope'

Question Nos 6 – 8:

This essay task is designed to allow candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to assess information, express an opinion, and provide evidence of that opinion. To achieve 9 or 10 marks, candidates have to note five cogent points in a clear and effective manner, providing quotes from the relevant texts to support their views.

Most candidates achieved 7 or 8 marks, which means that they have developed five separate points, and justified their opinion reasonably well, but have not provided direct quotations from the source texts.

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