

**Biblical Hebrew**

Advanced GCE **H417**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **H017**

**Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**H017/H417/R/11**

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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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Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Annesley  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622  
Facsimile: 01223 552610  
E-mail: [publications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

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## EXAMINERS' REPORTS

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## F191 Translation, Comprehension and Literature

The unseen passage (Question 1) generally earned candidates high marks despite full marks for translation only being awarded for "virtually faultless" English; and despite comprehension and specific Hebrew grammatical points eluding a number of candidates on occasions.

### Question 1(a) (i)

נִשְׁבַּח was sometimes mistaken for נִשְׁבַּח and the reflexive or passive meaning of להתרפא was sometimes unknown.

מִכִּיָּם does not mean necessarily "smiting" [and certainly not "makkim"]. 'Striking' would be better.

An elegant English meaning for אֲרַמְיָם would have been preferable.

נִפְשַׁכֶּם יֵשׁ אִם

- the idiom was sometimes misunderstood or inelegantly rendered.

יֵצֵא אֶל

-the jussive meaning was seemingly unknown by some.

פְּלִיט

was unknown to many candidates (although it is in the vocabulary list).

There was some uncertainty about the locative יִזְרְעֵאלָהּ.

הַצִּפּוֹת Some candidates were seemingly unaware that in Biblical times watchmen could be stationed over the gate.

רַכָּב The difference in punctuation between the rider and his vehicle was unknown by some, as was the interrogative meaning of אֵהְיוּ שְׁלוֹמֶם

1a)ii) There was uncertainty whether שְׁנֵי qualified כִּבּוֹר or סוּס

שְׁלוֹמֶם - an acceptable rendering was not always appreciated.

The suffix of אֲזַחְרֵי was not appreciated by weaker candidates.

Similarly, some did not know the perfect or pluperfect meaning of שָׁבַח or בָּרַךְ.

Few understood the meaning of the root נָהַג used three times in the passage.

1b), 1c) Generally well done.

1d) Candidates did not always elicit the full information from the lines in question.

1e) Some creative answers were accepted by examiners as being correct.

1f) Candidates could not distinguish between the man being reported as 'mad' and the 'manner of his driving'

1g) Two distinct points were required.

1h) Candidates were allowed latitude and thus there was a good response.

1i) Most candidates were able to justify the connection between the meaning given and the literal rendition the Hebrew would have required.

1j) For full marks candidates should have mentioned that both verbs were infinitive constructs, and that one was *Nifal* and the other *Kal*.

Summary for Question 1- a good knowledge and understanding of grammar would have helped candidates reach a higher potential with Unseen Texts.

Generally the *Set Texts* were well-learned. Some candidates were able to score very high marks even if occasionally the text notes were learnt verbatim.

## **Question 2**

2a) Surprisingly, at this level, translation of some very basic, routine phrases embedded in these passages proved beyond some candidates when they should have been an easy way of amassing marks.

2b) Most candidates could not define adequately the different types of interest charged.

2c) Some candidates did not know what parallelism was.

2d) Candidates knew the legal position of slaves.

2e) Candidates were unclear what was required and did not explain what "redemption" גאולה meant.

2f) allowed for a variety of answers including being creative.

2g) Few candidates scored full marks. Some candidates did not fully appreciate the meaning of alliteration, even if they identified compounds including variants of the letters ת-ב-ש  
Few candidates realised the retention of the dominant letters ש and ב in בשבתכם

2h) Eight point questions are generally worded in a very open way to allow for a range of answers. They are marked with due latitude, enabling high results. However candidates have to know the contents of their set books. Although Midrashic answers do receive credit where relevant, the examination is based on a plain exegetic methodology which is justified in terms of grammar and context.

It is good practice to number points, or to show the plan the candidate is going to build upon. Also each point should ideally contain a Hebrew proof word or phrase on which the candidates' answer is being based.

Perhaps it is not superfluous to add that handwriting which is illegible can result in lower scores than if it is legible.

**Question 3**

- 3a) The first question in each section is designed to ease the candidate into the passage.
- 3b) Many candidates did not know what ellipsis was. Even if they did, they could rarely explain the examples in lines 2 and 4.
- 3c) Candidates rarely scored full marks on this question because they did not understand the idiom was an oath, or they could not explain the differing punctuation applied to G-d and man.
- 3d) Not always understood and consequently inadequately explained.
- 3e) Generally, well answered.
- 3f) Candidates sometimes did not understand the cohortative.
- 3g) A good many candidates missed full marks because they did not refer extensively enough.
- 3h) & 3i) Notes on the quality of translation and the longer essay type question have been treated earlier.

**Question 4**

- 4a) The uses of the infinitive absolute allowing it to substitute for an infinitive or declined verb were not always recognised.
- 4b) & 4c) were somewhat inter-related. Knowledge of the meaning of the roots was required in order to answer the question adequately.
- 4c) Legalities always need to be explained so that any informed reader - not just Hebrew readers of the Bible - can understand them.
- 4d) and 4e) Generally well answered as long as there was adequate preparation.
- 4f) Any correct grammatical term was accepted.
- 4g) A sometimes disappointing response.
- 4h) presented no problems.
- 4i) Remarks above about these essay-like questions apply here too. Many candidates did well in them.

**Summary**

Overall the standard this year was well up to standards in previous years. Those candidates who had reviewed and understood their set texts generally presented a good response. There were some candidates who presented excellent answers and a small number of outstanding candidates.

## F192 Translation, Comprehension, Composition and Literature

The examiners have not commented where the majority of the candidates have answered individual questions satisfactorily. A full treatment of all questions is given in the Mark Scheme and Solutions.

### Question 1: Unprepared Translation and Comprehension

(b) Many candidates failed to distinguish accurately between ordinal and cardinal numbers. However many noted that numbers are used to denote dates.

(c) Only a minority of candidates indicated that the letter ן (*waw*) can introduce a separate clause.

(d) A number of words eluded a sizable minority of candidates (even though they are commonly used in Biblical texts).

כלאו (line 9) [his imprisonment] was sometimes confused with כלאים [mixed fibres].

ארוחתו (line 10) surprisingly was not always recognised.

ונלוה (line 11) and ונספחו (line 12) were generally not known.

The objective suffix ם attached to the verb ולקחום (line 12) was rarely considered.

Thus עמים ולקחום (line 12) was often mistranslated as 'they will take nations' instead of 'nations will take them'.

The verb ורדו (line 13) was generally not recognised and often thought as stemming from the root ירד .

However there were some very good translations that were awarded almost full marks.

(f) Although the *hofal* was often recognised, few commented on its function. Therefore many candidates achieved only half marks on this question.

(g) This was generally well done. It would have been clearer if candidates had indicated specifically, in their response, whether they were discussing 'strengths' or 'loss of power'.

(i) The pointing was rather weak. As a positive step forward, the examiners would suggest that approximately fifteen minutes a week should be set aside for examining a text, of no more than four verses, from the grammatical and pointing perspective.

The facility offered by the Davka program to produce both pointed and non-pointed texts would be helpful in this regard. This exercise could be completed on computer

[Use the right hand shift key in order to insert the *dagesh*].

### Question 2 Translation of English into Biblical Hebrew.

There were some good attempts. Candidates tend to disregard pointing and grammatical details. (See Question 1(i) above) Some otherwise capable candidates were thus attaining about half marks for 'accuracy of application of Biblical Hebrew grammar'. However, candidates attained higher marks for their recognition of 'Biblical Hebrew style'

### Question 3 Set Texts: Judges/Shoftim

The set texts were generally well known.

(c) Grammarians list the root of ויזר (line 6) as זור. (The examiners allowed זרה in accordance with commentary of R Joseph Kara.)

(d) The examiners would advise that Biblical maps should be used for effective teaching in this section. (Please see page 27 of the Specification for recommended Biblical Atlases although others may be used). See the Mark Scheme for a full treatment.

(e) Most candidates connected the name גִּדְעוֹן with the concept of 'chopping down' (גִּדַע). Some candidates did not apply this idea to the second quotation.

It should be noted that the Biblical text, *ad loc*, states [7:14] that the response of the Midianite soldier was 'this is nothing but the sword (ie destructive power) of Gideon/Gidon.

(f) and (g) were generally well answered.

#### **Question 4 Set Text: Isaiah/Yishayahu**

No candidate offered this question.

#### **Question 5 Psalms/Tehillim**

(a) Some candidates commented on the superscription of Psalms/Tehillim 120-134 which was not required and ignored the linguistic aspects of the word תּוֹלַעַם .

(d) Most candidates recognized examples of alliteration (although some confused this with assonance). However the concept was not always explained with reference to the examples cited. This obviously lost marks.

(e) It would be helpful if candidates would explain if they were referring to personal or universal themes. [See comment on (1g)]

Generally, well answered.

#### **Questions 6-8: Essays**

No candidate offered question 7

Questions 6 and 8 were well answered and many candidates scored high marks. Very often, the essays cited accurate quotations. Some candidates gained full marks in this section.

#### **Advice**

A small minority of candidates tend to squash their answers into a limited space.

It would be appreciated if candidates could be advised as to their right to use additional sheets. Handwriting is proving problematic. The examiners obviously allow tolerance. However if they cannot read the answers, there is limited scope for awarding marks.

Under defined criteria, computers can be used, as they were by a small number of candidates, successfully.

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

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

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Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

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**Head office**  
**Telephone: 01223 552552**  
**Facsimile: 01223 552553**

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