

Biblical Hebrew

Advanced GCE **H417**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **H017**

Report on the Units

June 2010

H017/H417/R/10

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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

Question 1

a (i)

Most candidates dealt well with the unseen translation, though the initial phrases

לְמַעַל לְ (line 1) and הֲלֹא לָכֵם לְדַעַת (line 2) offered difficulty; so did אֲמַרִים in the sense of "intend". Words that not known were וַיִּמְרֹד (line 4) – (surprisingly as the root is in the Page Kelley vocabulary list), וַיִּקְבְּצוּ (line 4) - especially in the *nifal*, וַיִּתְאַמְצוּ (line 4), לְהִתְחַזֵּק (lines 5,6), הַמּוֹן (line 6), וַעֲמַכֶּם (line 7) and עֲגִלִי (line 7).

a (ii)

Very few candidates explained that the י in אֲדָר נִיו (line 4) indicated not merely a plural but a royal plural.

b(i)

Few candidates gave convincing justifications for the idiom בְּרִית מְלַח (line 3)

b (ii)

Few candidates realized that נָעַר (line 6) indicated a junior or someone acting in an inexperienced way.

d

Some candidates lost marks by not explaining three of Abijah's/Aviyah's positive points about Judah (lines 10-13).

e

Most candidates were unaware why guttural letters would be vowelled with a *hataf-patach* (lines 7,13,14)

f

Candidates understood Jereboam/Yerave'am tried to ambush Abijah/Aviyah

g

Few candidates parsed הִסֹב (line 16) and בְּהֲרִיעַ (line 18) well - both the root and the conjugation eluded them.

Question 2

a

Some candidates explained only one farming activity: sowing or pruning, not both.

b (i)

Perhaps because of their familiarity with it, few candidates gave exact, polished translations of the set text.

b (ii)

Candidates could not explain that **נִפְיָהּ** (line 5) meant grain attached to the soil and uncultivated by ("aloof to") the farmer.

c

Generally candidates did not always identify the noun **שְׁבִיַּת** here as "a Sabbath year", a rest year of the seven-year agricultural cycle, in its singular absolute construct and plural feminine construct forms. Similarly, candidates did not indicate that the final **י** sharpened and intensified the noun as "an absolute rest".

d

Though candidates knew of the Jubilee's effect on individual land ownership, they usually did not note its effect on the tribe as well.

e

Again, despite this being a set book, roots and conjugations eluded examinees.

f

This question was answered satisfactorily

g

This longer question asking for a listing of land ownership as detailed in Leviticus/Vayikra 24-27 was generally well answered

Question 3

a

Nearly everyone answered this introductory question correctly

b (i)

Translation was largely satisfactory.

b (ii)

Candidates did not differentiate between *Kal* and *Po'el* conjugations, nor give the meaning of *both* words **פִּלְנֵי אֱלֹמוֹנֵי**

c and d

Some candidates lost marks by making only a single point, rather than several, in full explanation of both the **שִׁדְּוֹ קִדְּוֹ** and of Do'eg.

e, f and g

Candidates found it easy to describe David's behaviour in front of Achish and his reaction to opposition, but harder to identify correctly popular sayings, humour/irony and exaggeration from the passage (lines 19, 23 and 18 respectively).

Question 4

a

A good many candidates overlooked the increase Jeremiah /Yirmiyahu predicted in the animal population.

b (i)–(ii)

Set book translation was satisfactory but most candidates did not offer a satisfactory justification of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** connecting the speedy blossoming of the almond tree with the speed or eagerness of the reaction the prophet was describing.

c

Candidates found differentiating between tenses and between *hifil* and *hofal* difficult.

d

Some candidates did not know that **וְאִם** introduced a conditional sentence or rhetorical question or appreciate that **וְאִם** started a result clause.

e and f (i)

Candidates satisfactorily identified the natural components the prophet used in his message, and contrasted the old and new relationship of G-d and the people of Israel.

f (ii)

The abler candidates used this question to solidify their overall mark and thus gain higher grades.

Conclusion

The performance of candidates throughout the paper suggests strongly that it is not enough to be familiar with the vocabulary or plot line of the set books alone. Those who pay attention to formal grammar, such as verbal morphology, syntax, and the technical reasons for vocalisation, score highest in both seen and unseen passages.

F192 Translation, Comprehension, Composition and Literature

Question 1

a

The majority of candidates answered successfully.

b (i)

This translation question proved quite difficult, although there were many brave attempts. Overall, the majority of candidates understood the thrust of the passage, even if they failed occasionally to pinpoint the exact meaning of a minority of the clauses. One could refer to the phrase כּוֹס הַיּוֹד (line 5) where the noun הַיּוֹד eluded all but the best candidates. Essentially it is a common noun meaning 'glory.'

b (ii)

Most candidates understood the concept of shepherds and goats. For a full treatment, please see the Solutions.

c

Most candidates understood the concept of defeating the nation's enemies, but did not pay enough attention to the details.

d (i)

Some candidates confused the root רבה with the root רבב. Candidates should have observed that there was no *dagesh* in the ב, thus precluding the root רבב.

d (ii) and (iii)

There was generally a good attempt at the translation and derivation.

e

Candidates sometimes failed to refer to geographical features and, therefore, it was difficult for examiners to award more than half marks for this question.

f

It was rare for a candidate to score more than half marks for this question. As a way forward, the examiners would suggest that close attention should be paid to the grammatical formation and differentiation of verbs.

Question 2

This is certainly the most difficult question in the examination. The comments recorded in 1f are certainly pertinent as well. It was rare for a candidate to score more than 10/15 for this question. More significant perhaps is the fact that, in the marks awarded for style, the examiners failed to award more than 3/5. Again, as a way forward, it is suggested that close attention should be paid to the formation of Biblical sentences, either during the sessions devoted to set texts or unseen translation. This would have a secondary effect of improving the candidates' ability to answer the composition question more adequately.

Question 3

As a general rule, this question was answered at least adequately by the large majority of candidates and it is sufficient to point out ways which will help future candidates for this subject. The comments will therefore be restricted with this aim in mind.

3b (ii)

Surprisingly, a number of candidates did not recognise the *hifil* conjugation. The majority of candidates certainly recognised the idea of summoning, but did not draw the conclusion that a clarion call was the method used in ancient society to achieve this aim.

3c

Some candidates failed to understand that the root מִכַּר used in the sense of 'handing over' was unique to the Book of Judges /Shoftim.

3e (i)

The examiners would urge centres to consider the importance of referring to a Biblical atlas and understanding the geographical features described in the text. A full treatment is given in the Solutions.

3g

Candidates sometimes restricted themselves to one criticism only. There was plenty of choice, as at least three are given in this paragraph.

Question 4

Only a minority of candidates attempted this question.

4b (ii)

Few candidates understood that the use of the ל preceding an infinitive construct can sometimes be a substitute for a finite verb. (Please see the Mark Scheme and Solutions for full treatment.)

4c and d

These questions demanded close attention to the Biblical text. Candidates very often wrote around the subject, but were not specific enough in referring to the grammatical features which the question demanded. Again, there is a full treatment in the Mark Scheme.

Question 5

Generally a well answered question.

5b (ii) and c

This question was similar to 4c and d (referred to above) but was answered in a better way.

5e

It would help if the candidates would refer to the Psalm that they are writing about, though, of course, no candidate was penalised for not referencing his/her answer.

5f

The examiners found it difficult to award more than half marks for this question, as there was not enough reference to linguistic features.

Questions 6 – 8

There were some very good attempts at these questions. There was a tendency amongst some to rehash essays that they had obviously practised prior to the examination. In itself there is nothing wrong with this practice, but candidates must examine the exact question being asked and adapt their material accordingly. It is appreciated that under examination conditions this can prove difficult. As a way forward, with a few minutes planning (as was evidenced by the better candidates), improvements can certainly be made.

The material covered by the set text was generally well known.

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