

GCSE

Biblical Hebrew

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J196**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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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A201 Language

General Comments:

This paper was consistent with papers of previous years, in which the paper follows a theme. There is one new feature to the paper, and that is the final question which is an essay type question. This asks candidates to comment on a statement, providing proof from the text. This is in line with the demands of the advanced papers of this subject. Overall, candidates responded well to this question, which is very pleasing.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1

(a) **קָמְלָנוּ** [Than us] Many candidates wrote 'from us'. The comparative *Mem* is part of the syllabus, and should be taught.

וְנִסְתָּר Majority of candidates made the elementary mistake of confusing the root **אָסַר** with **סָתַר**.

(b) Examiners were very surprised to note how many candidates were unfamiliar with **נָסַר** in verbs. This form appears a number of times through this section, and very many candidates translated these verbs in the future tense.

Another feature of these passages is the words **כִּי אִם**, which appear twice. Some candidates accurately translated as 'except for', or other acceptable alternatives. Most candidates showed that they were not familiar with the use of this phrase.

אִם עַל הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב : This was commonly translated as 'if the king is good', instead of 'If it is good for the king'.

וּבְנֵינוּ: The root **בָּנָה** appears in this question, as well as in Question 2. Many candidates mistook this for sons / children.

Question 2

(d) (ii) **בְּנֵךְ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִחֲלָצֶיךָ** : Examiners were much amused at the varied and unintelligible attempts at this phrase. It is clear that very few candidates have any idea what this means, even when they did write 'loins' rather than 'lions'! Candidates would be best served if they were taught a phrase such as 'your son who is born to you', rather than being taught ye olde English words that have no meaning to them.

(e) **אֲרוֹן** : Candidates are expected to know the English translation for all words that appear in the syllabus. It is not acceptable for candidates to transliterate 'Aron'. Similarly, candidates should be taught to use English at all times, e.g. 'pray' rather than 'daven', which is not an English word. Although examiners have accepted 'Hashem' for 'G-d', that is the only exception, and candidates are penalised for 'daven' or other such errors.

(j) (iii) **עַל מַה** : Candidates were not awarded a mark for stating 'what did G-d do'. The mark was awarded for 'why' / 'for what reason'.

(l) This is the new final question, which asks candidates to consider the information in the passages, and to make a point and provide evidence / justification for their views by referring to the text. Candidates do not have to quote word for word from the text; they may state in their justification in their own words, but it must be based around the text provided.

A mark is awarded for an accurate observation [up to a maximum of 3], and a mark is awarded for the evidence.

If a candidate wishes to quote from the text, they should not simply copy the Hebrew text as evidence, they must translate the text in full.

Candidates should also not simply write 'as it says in paragraph 2 line 15'. It is up to the candidate to write their justification in full.

Example 1:

'The tabernacle was a place where G-d's presence rested, as it says: I have sanctified this house for My Name to be there always'. [1 mark for a relevant point and 1 mark for a correct justification]

Example 2:

"The Tabernacle was important because the Israelites could only have it if they followed G-d's laws. The passage says that if they do not follow the Commandments, the Tabernacle will be destroyed. This shows how significant the Tabernacle is"

[2 marks: The point is accurate, and the justification is provided, even though a formal quotation was not provided, but the information is drawn directly from the text and is accurately conveyed.]

Example 3:

'The tabernacle was a place where G-d's presence rested, as it says in Paragraph 2 line 15. [1 mark for a relevant point, but no mark for the justification]

Example 4:

'The tabernacle was a place where G-d's presence rested, As it says 'Hebrew text.....'. [1 mark for a relevant point, but no mark for the justification]

A202 Literature

As usual there was quite a range of marks and standards of response to the questions. Some candidates had been well prepared as was evident from the erudite and scholarly written scripts.

One comment the examiners wish to make is with regard to knowledge of the geography of the region. For example, many candidates thought the Euphrates River was in Egypt whilst others thought that Moab was in Northern Israel! The teaching of the material should include where places are and any relevant historical data.

- 1a Well answered
- 1b The vast majority of scripts were awarded full marks for this question. Some mistranslated *וַיַּחַיְתֶךָ* as 'and you will live' not realising the verb is a causative Piel: 'and they will keep you alive'.
- 1c i Almost all candidates answered this correctly.
- 1c ii Most responses were very good.
- 1d Few candidates answered this correctly.
- 1e Well answered
- 1f Some candidates misunderstood the word *שָׁלוֹם* for 'peace' and had difficulty in answering the question. Centres are advised to train candidates to begin their answer to this kind of question by translating the given phrase/verse – this helps candidates to structure their answer clearly and is also usually awarded at least one mark.
- 1g Some translated *עֶשֶׂן תְּנוּרָה* as 'pillar / column of smoke' rather than 'smoky furnace'.
- 1h Most received at least two marks.
- 1i i Well answered although some wrote 'definite article before *כַּף* letter'.
- 1i ii Well answered but some wrote 'missing letter' and failed to say what the letter was.
- 1j i Most candidates recognised the function of the Yud was to make the noun plural.
- 1j ii Well answered
- 1k Many candidates had no idea how to answer this question. 'East of Israel' was not accepted as it was too vague. It should be noted that explaining the text here would have scored at least one mark, but most candidates were unable even to point out that the Euphrates river, together with the Nile, marked the borders of the land which G-d promised to Abram in this passage.
- 2a Well answered
- 2b i Well answered
- 2b ii This question attracted a fine range of replies.
- 2c Most candidates responded well to this question.
- 2d Almost all scripts contained full answers and were awarded maximum points.
- 2e Various incorrect answers included *פּוֹר*, *פּוֹרָה* and *פּוֹרָה*.
- 2f Well answered

- 2g Some struggled with the phrase הלבן מאה שנה יולד not realising that: the ה introduced a question, the word אם is not 'if' but the second part of the question, or that יולד was Niphal.
Others did not know what לו meant.
There was also some confusion with pronominal suffixes – many translated לזרעו as 'to **your** descendants after **you**', and שמעתיך as 'I have listened to **him**'
Others still translated יוליד as a passive which was considered a minor error.
Often ונתתיו לגוי גדול was interpreted as 'and I will give him a great nation' rather than 'and I will make him into a great nation'.
- 2h Many did not know the derivation of the word but were awarded one mark for translation.
- 2i Many scored at least two points out of the available three.
- 3a Well answered
- 3b Some candidates did not realise the ה of הכמות נבל is a hé interrogative nor did they know the meaning of בני עולה. In other scripts, ויוסיפו כל העם was translated as 'all the people gathered'.
- 3c Well answered
- 3d Well answered
- 3e Well answered by most candidates, though some wrote 'Jonathan' or 'Asahel'.
- 3f i Well answered
- 3f ii Well answered
- 3g Although the question was meant to elicit answers regarding the verb היו without the ל preposition, credit was given to responses explain why Ishboshet was simply referred to as 'the son of Saul'.
- 3h Many good answers were offered.
- 3i i Well answered
- 3i ii Some candidates thought the *dagesh* in the כ indicated the Piel.
- 3i iii Many wrote Pual.
- 3i iv Well answered
- 4a Some answered 'to be crowned' which was not awarded a mark as David had already made Hebron his capital.
- 4b Those who wrote merely 'he took Israel out and brought them in' without mentioning 'in war' did not score a mark.
- 4c Well answered.
- 4d Most candidates did well and mentioned valid points from the various commentaries.
- 4e i Well answered
- 4e ii Well answered
- 4f Some candidates wrote 'wood' rather than 'cedar wood' or stones' rather than 'stone-masons'.

- 4g Well answered
- 4h i One had to write 'infinitive construct of a Lamed-hé verb' or at least 'infinitive construct of the verb ה'יה'.
- 4h ii Some wrote 'feminine' but did not receive a mark unless they wrote 'construct' as well.
- 4i Some candidates did not realise that ויעל in this passage was Hiphil: 'he brought up'. Others struggled with the word ומריא.
- 5a Well answered
- 5b Some wrote 'tell me' rather than 'it was told to me'.
- 5c Well answered
- 5d A number of candidates confused ולא תגערו 'and you will not rebuke' with ולא תגעו 'and you will not touch'.
- 5e Some candidates confused the legal process of 'chalipin' (transferring ownership by means of a token article) with 'chalitzah' (the release of a widow from the levirate marriage); both involve the removal of a shoe.
- 5f i and ii Well answered
- 5g i Most candidates wrote the correct answer although others thought חיל meant 'army'.
- 5g ii Well answered
- 5h There were some very good points made including the fact that the word is a hapax legomenon.
- 5i i Well answered
- 5i ii Some answered before a בכל"ם letter.
- 5i iii Some wrote, 'one cannot have two consecutive sheva's'. This was not qualified by 'at the beginning of a word' or 'where both are sounded'.
- 5i iv Many candidates wrote 'before a guttural'. Again, this is not correct.
- 6a Some candidates confused the two set texts and wrote 'Jephthah'.
- 6b Generally well answered
- 6c Well answered
- 6d i and ii Most candidates knew where Moab was but some had no idea where Edom was.
- 6e Well answered
- 6f Well answered
- 6g Many candidates offered some very good points explaining that פליטי אפרים might be the speakers or part of the direct speech.
- 6h i Some wrote מעברות for 'bridges' which is not the precise translation.
- 6h ii Well answered
- 6i Most answered this question well but some candidates struggled with the use of the second *yud*.
- 6j Well answered
- 6k The question asked for a verb in the passages and not just a verb root, so מדד or סבב was not awarded a mark.

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