



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (1061)

RSS06 Old Testament

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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RSS06 *Old Testament*

General comments

Although this was a small entry paper, considerably more candidates sat the examination than in the January series, and candidates represented a very wide range of ability. By far the most popular questions were Question 2 and Question 4. Question 1 was the least popular. There was no widespread misunderstanding of questions, though questions were not always read with sufficient care. In their answers to questions, a number of candidates included, in the first part of each question, material that would have been creditable had it appeared in the second part, and vice versa. Candidates need to understand the different skills being assessed in these two parts of the question and structure their essays accordingly. In the first part of each question, candidates should note that to attain Level 5 and above there must be exemplification of points made. Candidates should use the Bibles available in the examination to locate material to support their answers. At the same time, candidates need to avoid mere story-telling.

Question 1 (Topic 1 *An introduction to the world of the Old Testament*)

Question 01

This question required some detailed knowledge of Canaanite religion and an understanding of its influence on Hebrew religion. Of those candidates who attempted it, some were very well prepared, showing a wide knowledge and the ability to give exemplification from the Old Testament. Most candidates made some reference to fertility cults and syncretism, but better answers referred, for instance, to El Shaddai and El Elyon as names for God, to the architecture and features of holy places, and to cultic personnel and practices.

Question 02

Candidates who commented in Question 01 on the perceived threat to Israel's religion appeared to be unsure what to write in this part of the question and consequently produced weak responses. The more successful responses considered the extent to which Canaanite influence was simply a way of managing the change from a semi-nomadic to agrarian lifestyle and also the extent of the threat posed by Ahab's marriage to Jezebel. Some candidates made effective use of the Elijah narratives.

Question 2 (Topic 2 *Old Testament views of God's relationship with the people*)

Question 03

Less able candidates tended to give almost exclusively narrative answers to this question, often summarising Genesis 17. The details of the Mosaic covenant were less well known. Almost all candidates referred to the Decalogue but relatively few showed much awareness of Exodus 19³⁻⁶. A significant number of candidates confused the calls of Abraham and Moses with the covenants. Better answers focussed on the concept of covenant as set out by scholars, exemplifying the different aspects with reference to the set texts. Many candidates also included Genesis 15 and Exodus 24, although these are not required by the Specification. A small number of candidates considered the Adamic and Noachic covenants and some included reference to Amos.

Question 04

Of all the AO2 questions, this was one of the most successfully answered. Most candidates were able to give some relevant argument, generally pointing to the personal nature of the promises made to Abraham and the impersonal imposition of the Decalogue. Better responses

included material from Exodus 19 on both sides of the argument. A small number of candidates contrasted the Genesis 15 with the Genesis 17 accounts of the Abrahamic covenant, although there is no requirement to study the former text.

Question 3 (Topic 3 *The phenomenon of prophecy*)

Question 05

The quality of answers to this question varied considerably, as did the approach taken. Better answers considered a wide range of different types, for example seer, ecstatic, court, war and cultic prophets, making appropriate reference to Old Testament passages. Weaker answers simply recounted the narratives relating to Samuel, sometimes including brief reference to the contest on Mount Carmel. The major reason for failing to access the higher levels of the mark scheme was the concentration of some answers on Amos. Candidates should know that Amos was an 8th century prophet. There were also some potentially competent answers that gave detailed accounts of a range of types, but failed to give any exemplification. Such answers were unable to achieve above Level 4 of the mark scheme.

Question 06

Candidates, for the most part, argued successfully for the significance of both Samuel and Elijah (though few referred to the Naboth incident), but very few candidates addressed the focus of the question, which was on the contribution of these prophets to the development of prophecy. In this part of the question, reference to Amos in particular, or 8th century prophecy in general, was appropriate.

Question 4 (Topic 4 *8th century prophecy – Amos*)

Question 07

The maturity of answers varied considerably. There were some very weak comments, referring to Amos' portrayal of God as being 'cross with his people'. Many answers were restricted to the punitive aspects of God's nature. Of those answers that made use of Amos 9¹¹⁻¹⁵, only a small number referred to the scholarly debate on the dating of these verses. There were, however, some excellent responses that used a range of ideas. There was detailed examination of Amos' portrayal of God as the Lord of creation and history, exercising his power over other nations.

Question 08

Many candidates wrote about the relevance of Amos' teaching in general and thus missed the focus of the question and failed to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. Of those who did address the focus of the question, many gave very general responses, largely based on lack of religious belief in the modern world. Those who gave a wide range of ideas in Question 07 were better equipped to answer this part of the question, so there were a similar number of very thoughtful and cogent responses.