



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Religious Studies

RSS06

(Specification 2060)

Unit F Old Testament

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

As in previous sessions, there was a wide range in the quality of scripts. It was pleasing to note that all students attempted to answer two questions, although one or two attempted only the first part of the second one chosen. Apart from some responses to question 4, there was no major misunderstanding of the requirements of the questions. Although perhaps the most straightforward question on the paper, question 1 was the least popular. Question 2 was the most popular, but significant numbers answered the other two questions.

Question 1 *An introduction to the world of the Old Testament*

- 01 Students noted the two-pronged nature of this question. Consideration of key features of Canaanite religion focused chiefly on fertility worship, but some students also referred to the nature of Canaanite worship. Some showed sound knowledge of the chief gods and of Canaanite mythology. Students were for the most part aware of ways in which Canaanite religion influenced the life and religion of ancient Israel, but there was little depth, and exemplification from the Old Testament was often limited. This had an impact on the marks that could be awarded.
- 02 Most students were able to explain clearly why Canaanite influences posed a threat to Israel's religion. There were many references to the threat posed by Jezebel, though students often implied that, prior to her, Yahwism was pure, contradicting what they had written in 01. Students pointed out that the syncretism led to the setting aside of the Mosaic covenant and the Decalogue. They might have put as a counter-argument the view of many scholars that this covenant and the Decalogue were a much later 'imposition' on the Mosaic period. Very few argued that Yahwism was enriched by some of the influences.

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

- 03 There were some competent responses to this question, with some effective use of scholarly comment on the significance of the phrase 'holy nation'. Less able students gave unbalanced answers, concentrating on the theophany or on the Decalogue. The more able referred to the similarities to ANE vassal treaties, expanding on some of the elements. Responses might have been improved by more detailed 'unpacking' of Exodus 19:3-6, which would in turn have given students more to discuss in 04. One candidate concentrated entirely on the account of the sealing of the covenant in Exodus 24. Some useful insights were given and credited, but examination of the set texts would have produced a more rounded response.
- 04 Those students who had considered Exodus 19:3-6 in 03 now produced some good arguments on both sides of the debate. Several argued for the overriding importance of the election of Israel as God's chosen people and of the Israelites' sense of identity as a nation. A few argued that what mattered was the insight given by Exodus 19-20 into the nature of God. Those with more limited awareness of the set texts tended to produce either one-sided answers in agreement with the claim, or they lost the focus of the question, which was on the covenant itself.

Question 3 *The phenomenon of prophecy*

- 05 Most students made effective use of the set texts, many including 1 Samuel 8, which is a set text for the first topic. There were no purely narrative responses. The majority considered Samuel as God's mouthpiece and as kingmaker. Many also referred to his function of giving advice or information, for which he was paid, and to his connection with the cult. There was also reference in many answers to the nature of prophetic ecstasy, sometimes with exemplification from the story of Saul. No links, however, were made with their connection to the cult or of their nationalist concerns, providing a Yahwist presence near a Philistine garrison.

06 This question produced some very thoughtful responses. Students were able to argue for prophets being extraordinary people and attempt a counter-argument. Several students claimed that the extraordinary nature of prophecy was in fact due to the inspiration and guidance of God rather than to the prophets themselves. Some students noted that there was no restriction to 10th century prophecy in this part, and so their answers included effective exemplification from Elijah and Amos.

Question 4 8th century prophecy – Amos

07 Most students noted the requirement to include two aspects of Amos' teaching. All made some attempt to deal with the topic of responsibility. They examined what Amos said in relation to the standard of behaviour expected of the people, outlining examples of social and religious failings and of inevitable judgement. Generally, students kept the focus on the question, linking what they wrote to responsibility. A significant number, however, misunderstood the term 'election' to refer to voting in the king or other officials and attempted to make Amos' teaching refer to political elections. In connection with this several students repeated the mistake seen often in previous examination sessions of identifying the king referred to in Amos 5:26 with Jeroboam II instead of seeing it as a reference to Assyrian deities and therefore possibly a later addition to the text. The term 'election' is in the specification and it is essential that students understand it. There were some excellent responses from those students who had studied it.

08 Many students pointed out that the term 'covenant' does not occur in Amos' teaching as found in the Old Testament book, referring to the view of many scholars that the covenant concept was a late development in Israelite theology. Many also argued persuasively that the covenant relationship is implied throughout Amos' teaching, creating links between his denunciations and the Decalogue. A number of students, however, did not understand the question, despite the fact that the wording was taken straight from the Issues box for this topic. Centres might wish to ensure that their students have considered each of these Issues prior to taking the examination.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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