

## **Examiners' Reports**

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**June 2011**

**J196/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 syllabus 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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### **EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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## Report to Centres - Biblical Hebrew GCSE - A201/01 - June 2011

### General Comments

This Biblical Hebrew examination ( A201/A202) is now in the second year of the new specification and proved to be as popular this year as previously. Candidates from twenty five centres took the examination (24 in the UK and 1 from South Africa) an increase of 1 over last year and the increased candidature comprised 543 students. Generally speaking, the examination was completed competently by the majority of students but it was abundantly clear that teaching and learning standards varied widely.

### Section A - Question 1 (a) - Insert Sheet

שברתי - the root was frequently not recognised

שנתים - most candidates understood the dual plural ending but many could not translate the noun

ויביאם - many responses failed to understand the *hifil* form of the word

נאם - there were few candidates who translated this word correctly even though it appears in the standard vocabulary list

יקם - the jussive form was mostly not recognised

דבריך - some candidates translated this in the singular and not the plural

### Question 1 (b) - translation

It was clear from the responses that, as in previous years, there remains both a wide divergence in pupil ability to translate and the quality of teaching in the constituent centres. Some candidates ignored the 'Vocabulary Assistance' supplied at the end of this question. The majority of students were able to deal with the vocabulary and sentence structure of the passage provided. A few words were commonly misunderstood - the main examples were:

המבלי, שלשים, חמשין, ויתחנן ותכד תיקר

The above words appeared several times in the passage for translation but

candidates were penalised only once for an incorrect response. Many candidates made a very creditable attempt at translation, however, it was noticeable that several candidates at the lower end of the mark range simply translated words without any regard to the overall meaning and flow of the passage. It was clear that some candidates in this group had little grasp of the vocabulary necessary to gain a reasonable grade and the examiners advise that centres make a point of focusing their students on this important aspect of this examination. As a complete contrast there were one or two centres where the teaching in the area of translation of Hebrew text was extremely rigorous and their candidates gained very high marks.

## Section B - comprehension

### Question 2

As in previous years this was a themed question. The four paragraphs were connected by being about women in the Bible.

Questions (a) and (b)(i) - (iv) being introductory questions were consistently well answered with most candidates gaining full marks.

(c) Very few correct translations were given for the word **ומשכת** ( and you will draw/attract). The majority of incorrect responses confused the root with the similar sounding **משח** ( to anoint).

(d) This question did not pose a major challenge to the majority of students.

(e) and (f) were generally well done.

(g)(i) The use of the Infinitive Absolute as a verbal noun was rarely noted (**שתה**)

Many candidates simply gave two examples of the Infinitive Absolute used for emphasis or omitted its contextual function altogether.

(ii) The *mappik* used for feminine possession was frequently misunderstood.

(h)(i) and (ii) were competently answered.

(i) The verb **תכבה** ( extinguish) was often mistaken for **תבכה** (weep).

(j) Most candidates were able to identify a verb in the *hifil* conjugation.

- (k) In this question candidates had to explain the function of the Hebrew letter **ן** in four separate contexts. A significant number of candidates did not give sufficient information to show that they knew exactly the function in each of the parts (i) to (iv). Many vague responses were given such as 'construct form' for (i) when the correct answer should be 'construct form of a feminine noun'. Many candidates chose to translate the word accurately as 'the wife of' which also gained the mark.
- (l) Many candidates seem to be unsure how to answer this kind of general question even though it has been consistently asked at the end of comprehensions over the years. Frequently responses were vague or consisted of stab points. Sometimes candidates would simply copy out the background to the paragraphs. The best responses showed an understanding of the question and demonstrated an effort to think through the answer.

The examiners advise centres to spend time revising past papers in order to familiarise students with the various different rubrics that have been employed in previous examinations.

**Report on the Units**

**A202 – Literature**

**Question 1**

- (a – c) Generally these were well-answered questions.
- (d) For the use of the letter *mem*, many candidates just wrote 'from' which was not accepted; the examiners were looking for the specific use of the letter i.e. privative or negative.
- (e) to (h) were answered quite competently.
- (i) Some candidates recognised the piel characteristic but most wrote (incorrectly) that the dagesh was to compensate for the missing  $\kappa$  of the root  $\kappa\theta\eta$ .
- (j) Many candidates attributed the *kamatz* under the  $\kappa$  to the fact the  $\kappa$  or the previous letter is a guttural.
- (k) There were plenty of solid in-depth responses to this question.

**Question 2**

- (a) The examiners would like to point out that the rubric of the question specifically asks the candidates to answer the questions in English. A minority responded to this question in Hebrew which technically invalidated the answer.
- (b) and (c) were answered very well except that some confused the way Jacob arranged his family here with the splitting of the camps earlier in the set text.
- (d) Some mistranslated וישקרו ('and he kissed him') as 'they kissed'.
- (e) Most answered this quite competently.
- (f) A large number of candidates thought that וישקרו was Niphal (due to the vowels and *dagesh* after the *yud*).
- (g) to (i) were well answered.
- (j) Some confused עוני אוני with עני ('poverty').

**Question 3**

- (a) to (c) Very few candidates had problems responding to these questions.
- (d) Whilst the vast majority of candidates recognised the Niphal, not many realised it was used interactively or reflexively.
- (e) to (g) were well answered.
- (h) Many candidates thought the problem with האהלי was the pointing of the word.

(i) to (j) posed few problems to candidates.

#### Question 4

(a) Many responses referred to areas of land and not to the specific border cities which was the correct answer.

(b) to (d) were tackled quite competently.

(e) Some candidates did not appreciate that the title 'Man of G-d' referred to a prophet.

(f) Although the Mark Scheme refers to the unusual plural ending of **הַמְּסִיּוֹ** some candidates saw the word as a singular, which is indeed unusual as it refers to 'my brothers' which is plural. Due credit was given for this response.

(g) and (h) were well answered.

(i) Many did not recognise the **ה** as the 'softening **ה**' but credit was given for any answer that recognized it was an extension of the imperative (and not a feminine suffix).

(j) and (k) were well answered.

#### Question 5

(a) Some candidates were confused about the relative dynasties of Judah and Israel and wrote *Nevat* for this question or for Question 6 (a).

(b) A few candidates referred to the fact Shechem had a sad history such as Dinah's kidnapping and the sale of Joseph. This was not the object of the question.

(c) Well answered.

(d) A significant proportion thought **הַקָּשָׁה** indicated the Piel conjugation. Others explained the **ה** prefix which was not the purpose of the question.

(e) There were many lengthy responses and some embarked on significant discrepancies in the narrative such as 'how do you advise' and 'what do you advise' to help with answering the question.

(f) 'Loins' was often written 'lions' but candidates were not penalized for this little slip.

(g) Some, but by no means all, realized **עֲקָרִימִם** was a metaphor.

(h) There were many good responses to this question.

(i) Most candidates were able to make some grammatical difference between the two words. Some wrongly thought **וְנָשִׁיב** was Niphal.

(j) and (k) were well answered.



**Question 6**

- (a) See 5 (a).
- (b) There was some confusion about who Absalom was; some thought he was David's brother and thus lost a mark.
- (c) Almost all scored full marks for this question.
- (d) Some failed to realize the civil war that occurred through both the tenures of Rehoboam and Abijam.
- (e) Most answered this competently.
- (f) Some did not understand the word גבירה ('position of queen mother').
- (g) to (i) were answered most adequately.
- (j) Many failed to recognise the infinitive construct. Others misread the question and wrote the conjugation.
- (k) Generally well answered.

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