

2009 HSC Classical Hebrew Extension

Sample Answers — Written Examination

This document contains ‘sample answers’, or, in the case of some questions, ‘answer may include’. These are developed by the examination committee for two purposes. The committee does this:

- (a) as part of the development of the examination paper to ensure the questions will effectively assess students’ knowledge and skills, and
- (b) in order to provide some advice to the Supervisor of Marking about the nature and scope of the responses expected of students.

The ‘sample answers’ or similar advice, are not intended to be exemplary or even complete responses. They have been reproduced in their original form as part of the examination committee’s ‘working document’. While the handwritten notes have been typed for legibility, no further editorial change or addition has occurred.

Section I — Prescribed Text

Question 1 (a)

Sample answer:

It is possible that the translator of the JPS edition understands verse 10 to conclude the song, as it is a closed *parasha* and also deals with justice. Verses 11–12 then are a statement about God’s deeds and the people who attest them versus those who don’t. Verse 13 then starts a new section which is politically specific and talks about actual actions done by God towards Israel, a description that continues in the following verses.

Kaplan sees verse 11 as the end of the yearning for God’s justice, as found in the opening verses of the chapter. This yearning involved the anticipation of the punishment of the enemies and those who refuse to acknowledge the divine power. This is justified by the extensive use of words for justice, judgement and righteousness throughout the passage. It is also in tune with the previous verses that are like a statement about the ways of God, named as a song in verse 1. In this case verse 12 begins a new section that is a prayer for peace and salvation for Israel, and is expressed as a request, rather than as a report.

Answers may include:

The original manuscript used by the printer differed in its division of the chapter.

Question 1 (b) (i)***Sample answer:***

The creatures mentioned in verse 1 are Leviathan, the straight serpent, and Leviathan, the twisting serpent and the Tanin. These are primeval monsters, perhaps snakes, whales, crocodiles or some other unknown creature. God is believed to have defeated these primeval monsters. The commentators interpret the two Leviathans to represent Egypt and Assyria, Ishmael and Edom, or the forces of chaos and evil in general, which God will ultimately vanquish.

Question 1 (b) (ii)***Sample answer:***

Literally כרם חמר could mean ‘vineyard of wine’, ‘vineyard of high quality’ or ‘vineyard that yields large quantities of wine’. In the present context it refers to Israel as the vineyard that God protects.

Answer could include:

Reference to the alternative textual reading: כרם חמר.

Question 1 (b) (iii)***Sample answer:***

The phrase שלום יעשה לי is translated in three different ways. Of these ways, number 3 is the literal translation: ‘Let it (the enemy) make peace with me’. In the context of this prophecy, the enemies of Israel (and hence of God) are told that if they attack, God will have no mercy on them, but if they take shelter in God, they will have peace. In other words, the peaceful act would create peace. However, this is not the translation of versions 1 and 2. Version 2 seems to give a loose translation of the idea behind the words, ie, the enemy will make himself a friend by acting peacefully. Version 1 seems to have difficulties with the syntax, which implies that the enemy will make peace with God and not vice versa. Therefore version 1 translates the preposition ל in an alternative way to mean ‘from’ instead of ‘to’.

Question 1 (c) (i)

Outcomes assessed: H2.3, H2.4, H2.5

Sample answer:

Verse 21 alludes to two historical events:

- (1) The victory of David over the Philistines in Mt Perazim (2 Sam 5:29).
- (2) The victory of Joshua over the Amorite kings in the Valley of Gibeon, where God cast big stones upon the Amorite kings in battle.

Question 1 (c) (ii)

Sample answer:

Infinitive construct

Question 1 (c) (iii)***Sample answer:***

- Alliteration – The repetition of the letter sounds is found in verse 13 and is used to express the fact that the words of God are not understood by drunkards.
- Euphemism – The substitution of a mild expression for a harsh one is used in verse 15 where the terms ‘falsehood’ and ‘lies’ are used to replace the words for idols.
- Hyperbole – A deliberate exaggeration not intended to be taken literally is found in verse 11, where it is said that the prophet speaks to the people in a foreign language, whereas he speaks to them in Hebrew. This is done to emphasise the fact that the people do not understand the words of the prophet.
- Imagery – A use of colourful language is found in verses 15 and 18 where the treaty of the people with death is described. This expresses the prophet’s strong rejection of the political decision of the people, rather than a real treaty with death.
- Metaphor – An implied comparison is found in verse 20 where the prophet describes a couch which is too short to stretch upon. This is a metaphor for the land that will become too small for the population. This metaphor is used to make the prophecy vivid, catch the attention of the people and exemplify the reality for them.
- Parallelism – A basic structure of Hebrew poetry where phrases of similar construction or meaning are placed alongside each other. For example, in verse 18 the covenant with death is repeated in order to emphasise its severity.
- Personification – A non-human is spoken of in human terms, as in verses 18–19, regarding the flood. The flood represents the swift victory of the Assyrians.

Answer could also include:

Reference to nature poetry (possibly verse 21)

Pun (verse 16) מוסד מוסד

Simile (verse 17)

Other forms of parallelism may be referred to

Question 2 (a)***Sample answer:***

In each of the above cases, the more literal Classical Hebrew of the *Tanakh* has been replaced by Mishnaic idioms. The developed language reflects the more legal and technical nature of the Mishna and Talmud.

Answers could include:

Examples:

- *al peh*: Classical Hebrew literally on/by the mouth
Talmudic idiom = by heart
- *lo yatza*: Classical Hebrew literally he has not departed
Talmudic idiom = he has not fulfilled his obligation
- *mikra*: Classical Hebrew literally an assembly, a calling
Talmudic idiom = Hebrew (Biblical) text
- *halakha*: Classical Hebrew literally going, way
Talmudic idiom = Jewish Law

Question 2 (b)***Sample answer:***

The debate centres on the *Shemoneh Esreh*. Each one concurs with the view that it is somehow inappropriate for a mere mortal to attempt a full analysis and praise of God's qualities.

Rabbah bar bar Chanah interprets the rule that one should not praise God to excess. This is based on Job 27:20. Rabbi Elazar, using Psalm 106:2, teaches that only one who is capable of declaring *all* of God's mighty acts should praise God beyond the context of the formal blessings.

Finally Rabbi Yehudah, uses Psalm 65:2 to teach that it is far better to remain silent than try to relate all of God's praises.

Question 2 (c) (i)**Sample answer:**

מגילת From where do we know that the *Megillah* may not be recited by heart?

Question 2 (c) (ii)**Sample answer:**

The Talmudic device used by Rava was a *Gezerah Shavah*. This is a means of inferring a ruling by analogy. Tradition dictates that in certain circumstances where the similar word or phrase occurs in two Biblical passages, often otherwise unrelated, both laws, however different, are subject to the same regulations and applications. In the case at hand, Rava links the word זכרון (from the story of Amalek, in Exodus 17:14) with that of נזכרים (from the Book of Esther 9:28). For Rava, this proved that just as the former story (Amalek) was recorded in a book, from where it may be read, so too the *Megillah* should be written down in book form, from where it too should be read, rather than recited by heart.

Question 2 (c) (iii)**Sample answer:**

The Gemara challenges the logic of Rava's answer by asking how one can be sure that 'commemoration' (זכירה) means 'reading'. The Gemara suggests that it simply means to look at the text without reading the words out loud. This challenge has ultimately no effect as the Gemara rejects this line of argument and upholds Rava's original suggestion.

Question 2 (d)

Answers could include:

WHY

The extract details laws regarding the *Shemoneh Esreh* and also the recital of the *Megillah* on *Purim*. This informs the reader **why** the Talmud was composed – in order to expound upon and interpret the books of the *Tanakh*, especially in matters of *Halakha*, Jewish Law. Its purpose is to detail the complete conduct of people and, most particularly, to outline the origin and scope of Jewish religious practice. This means including *Halakha* and *Aggadah*. So we find a text advising that silence is considered ‘the best medicine’, or that we may, at our peril, alter established prayers, or we may receive advice concerning the way in which we should recite a holy text and in what language.

HOW

As to **how!** This is done by quoting verses from the *Tanakh* and early rabbinic statements. Most particularly, reference is made to the Pentateuch, which is considered the basis of Judaism. Constant referral back to Biblical texts is common, and in this short extract alone, there are references to the Psalms, Job, Esther, Exodus, Deuteronomy and Genesis.

The Talmud was compiled by Babylonian rabbis (5th/6th century CE) in the form of discussions within the Babylonian academies (over the preceding 2–3 centuries). These discussions focus on the oral teachings of the earlier Palestinian rabbis, known as the *Tannaim* (1st century BCE – 2nd century CE). The extract is part of a tractate known as *Megillah*, which in turn is part of *Seder Moed* – one of the six volumes of the Mishna. The Talmud follows the same structure as the Mishna, although not all *masechtot* in the Mishna have an accompanying Gemara.

In the extract provided, reference is made, for example, to the Mishna and its parallel work – *Baraita*, eg *אלא מתניתין כברייתא*. The text of the Talmud is made up of short passages of Mishna and longer passages of Gemara (such as the extract provided). The Gemara discusses directly the Mishnaic text, whilst also conveying auxiliary information. For example, the Mishna that led to the extract provided, discusses reading the *Megillah* by heart and also reading it in other languages. This becomes part of the Gemara under review. However, the Mishna does not mention the composition of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, nor the aspect dealing with excessive praising of God – nonetheless this additional information is included in the Gemara.

So the Gemara often digresses, which in turn broadens the parameters of Talmudic study and enriches our knowledge of Jewish life and lore from the Talmudic period.

Certain techniques are used exclusively in rabbinic legal texts to determine the course of Jewish law. For example, in the extract provided we see that early rabbinic statements are held to be superior to those given by rabbis of later generations. (See reference to two of the earliest *Amoraim*, the Talmudic rabbis Rav and Shmuel, whose views are almost akin to those of the *Tannaim*) or hermeneutical principles such as *Gezerah Shavah* are employed, as in the case of *אזתא זכירה זכירה*.

Question 2 (d) (continued)

WHEN

How does the extract assist in determining **when** the Talmud was written?

We have some specific information from which we can date the statements in the Talmud, namely, the rabbis quoted as authorities. A few below will suffice to illustrate this point.

- *Shimon Hapakuli* – 1st century CE
- *Rabbah bar bar Chana* – Babylonian *amora* of the second generation 257–320 CE
- *Rava* – Babylonian *amora* 270–350 CE
- *Rav and Shmuel* – First generation *amoraim*, 219–257 CE
- *Rav Acha* – A Babylonian *amora*, senior contemporary of Abaye and Rava 300–350 CE
- *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel* – Fourth generation *tanna*, 165 CE approximately

We also find place names mentioned in the text that may have existed and been populated by Jews only at certain times. In addition, we find incidental information that assists in determining when the Talmud was written. For example, the use of the term *Targum*, and reference to the Greek language, clearly places these discussions within a particular historical context, most probably, 1st century BCE to 2nd century CE. The mention of other languages in this extract, eg Coptic, Elamite and Medean, suggests that the discussions took place after Jews had been exiled from their homeland and made their home in a number of different countries in the Near East. Research would show when Jews began living in each of the regions represented by these different languages. Finally the linguistic style of the Hebrew and Aramaic offers clues as to the chronology. There are clear differences, for example, between the Classical Hebrew of the *Tanakh* and that of Mishnaic Hebrew. Technical and legal Hebrew jargon date part of the passage from the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, whereas the use of Aramaic throughout, dates the final redaction to about 5th/6th century CE.

Section II — Non-prescribed Text

Question 3 (a) (i)

Sample answer:

The word שֶׁם refers to Jerusalem or Zion. This is indicated in verse 13 where Zion is mentioned as the chosen place בְּצִיּוֹן הָיָה בְּחָרָהּ. Also since the text mentions the dynasty of David and the anointed one (see verse 17) קָרַן לְדָוִד we can also assume that David's capital of Jerusalem is being referred to.

Question 3 (a) (ii)

Sample answer:

The psalmist uses human characteristics to describe God's instincts, feelings or actions such as speaking, teaching, sitting, having a home place, desiring, clothing, preparing physical items such as filling a lamp with oil and trimming its wick; they may include human feelings such as joy, shame or shaming.

Describing God in 'Human Form' is necessary – because by definition humans are limited to human vocabulary and emotions, and thus it is the only way they can describe the essence and character of the divine, in such a way it is easier for humans to relate to God.

Question 3 (a) (iii)

Sample answer:

The psalm promises David, that the kings of Israel would be his literal descendants on the condition that they kept the laws of the covenant that had been made between God and David. The king was to ensure that his children would learn these laws and keep them. In return God would vanquish the king's enemies and adopt Jerusalem as the principal place of residence for the king and the worship of God. God, Himself would use Mt Zion as His home and see that the royal family and the general population would be well fed. The priesthood would be righteous and supportive of the monarchy. The enemies, humiliated, would leave the king (David and his family) supreme and full of lustre. The House of David would be for evermore anointed as the source of kings and messiah.

Question 3 (b) (i)***Sample answer:***

The first usage of *lamed* represents the preposition ‘to’ or ‘for’. The second usage is the *lamed* showing possession, ‘by’ or ‘of David’ or alternatively ‘in regard to’.

Question 3 (b) (ii)***Sample answer:***

The verbal forms that give a sense of continuity and eternity are the participle (eg מְסַפְּרִים, מְנַיֵד) with no beginning or end, and the general repetitive sense of the imperfect verbal aspect (eg יִחַוּד, יִבְיַע) with a beginning, but an unstated general repetitiveness or continuity.

Question 3 (b) (iii)***Sample answer:***

The Psalmist compares the sun to a bridegroom (and, incidentally to a warrior) ready to race out each day as from his wedding canopy set for the events which follow. Each day for the sun and the groom, is circular, racing out in the morning and returning each evening, working like a warrior to keep the words of God.

Question 3 (b) (iv)***Sample answer:***

The word מְסַפְּרִים appears to convey that words are spoken and a story told. In its context, the heavens are said to recount (relate) the glory of God. However, this is contradicted by verse 4 which states that no words are spoken and no voice is heard. To resolve this difficulty we can understand the word מְסַפְּרִים metaphorically to mean that the heavens testify to the creative acts of God and to the eternity of God’s laws and covenant. The heavens exist, hence there is a creating and caring God.