



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission**

LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION 2007

HEBREW STUDIES

ORDINARY LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

HIGHER LEVEL CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

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1. General Introduction

1.1 The Syllabus

The format of Hebrew Studies at both levels in the Leaving Certificate Examination has remained the same for over twenty years. Currently, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is preparing a new syllabus, Jewish Studies, to replace Hebrew Studies. This is scheduled to happen in the Junior Cycle initially.

1.2 The Examination

In the Leaving Certificate examination, the examination papers at both Ordinary and Higher Level contain four sections: A, B, C and D. Each section carries 100 marks. Each section contains passages in Classical and post-biblical Hebrew. There are three subsidiary questions, (a), (b) and (c) based on each Hebrew passage. One question, usually (b), differs at each level. Questions (a) and (b) carry 25 marks each, while (c) carries 50 marks.

Question (a) seeks a knowledge of the background and significance of the specific prescribed text. Examiners look for candidate skill and competency in relating the passage to its historical, literary or cultural/religious background. For example (and depending very much on the specific text under discussion), the candidate is encouraged to take into account factors such as the following: if and how archaeology or the history of the Middle East generally, or the specific literary style of the author, or the theological aims of the author or the general theme and tenor of the book from which the passage is taken, can help highlight the points made in the passage under discussion. At Higher Level, examiners expect to see a wider discussion on the text. At Ordinary Level, a synopsis or summary of the text is acceptable as the basis of the candidate's response.

Question (b) aims to test the candidate's ability to read and understand Classical and post-biblical Hebrew. This question usually consists of a question concerning language. Three formats of question are normally found here: 'Write a brief note on'; 'Parse and translate'; 'Give a suitable title'.

Candidates are required to use square script in their answers.

Question (c) seeks a knowledge of the broader theme related to the Hebrew passage. The essay title in part (c) of each question is normally phrased in broad general terms to allow the candidate scope in interpreting it and to encourage originality in answering it.

At Ordinary Level, the examiners seek a descriptive treatment of the points the candidate makes but quotations and reference are still expected. At this level, the candidate must show evidence that he/she has acquired clear and precise overall perspectives, whether of the history or the literary nature of the Bible and Mishnah or the main theological themes of the Bible and Mishnah. It is very important that Ordinary Level candidates include biblical/mishnaic or historical references.

At Higher Level, examiners expect that candidates will display sound analysis of the topic. Simple descriptive summaries of the theme are not sufficient for high marks. At Higher Level, examiners look for evidence of an in-depth knowledge of the history, religion and civilisation of the Hebrew people and major themes associated with these. Candidate responses are expected to include appropriate biblical/mishnaic or historical references. It is for this reason that the essay question is allocated 50 marks in each question.

This report should be read in conjunction with the examination papers and the marking schemes for 2007. These are all available for downloading from the website of the State Examinations Commission at www.examinations.ie.

2. Ordinary Level

No candidate has sat the Leaving Certificate Hebrew Studies Ordinary Level paper in recent years.

3. Higher Level

3.1 Introduction

The numbers of candidates taking Hebrew Studies at both Junior and Leaving Certificate levels have been very low and, in some cases, non-existent in recent years. The following table shows the number of candidates taking Leaving Certificate at Higher Level in recent years.

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	0	1	0	1	1	1

Table I: Number of candidates taking Hebrew Studies at Leaving Certificate (Higher Level) 2002-2007

3.2 Performance of Candidates

The following table shows the results gained by candidates during the same period. The results are expressed as percentages.

Year	Total	A	B	C	ABC	D	E	F	NG	EFNG
2002	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2003	1	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2004	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2005	1	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2006	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2007	1	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table II: Grade outcomes Hebrew Studies at Leaving Certificate (Higher Level) 2002-2007.

3.3 Conclusions

Due to the very small number of candidates taking this subject, it is considered inappropriate to discuss the performance of these individual candidates in detail. However, a number of comments extrapolated from the reports of Examiners in recent years may be made:

- The standard of the Hebrew (language elements) has improved in recent years and this improvement is to be commended.
- Examiners continue to note that candidates could display more analysis and a greater awareness of some of the ambiguities and complexities involved. This is particularly true in question (c) of each passage where the candidate is required to write an essay.
- In question (c) also, essays are occasionally under developed and, hence, are too short. The weighting of 50 marks for each essay is considerable and marks are easily lost where the candidate does not engage fully with the question.
- Examiners also note the use of square script by candidates in recent years. This is to be commended as it is required by the syllabus.

3.4 Recommendations to Teachers and Students

Teachers and students are commended on the manner in which questions on Hebrew grammar are answered.

- Teachers should encourage their students to be more analytical in those sections of the syllabus that deal with background – historical or literary. Candidates should be precise, informative and analytical in their answers and avoid general responses
- In part (c) of each passage, at Higher Level, teachers should encourage students to present evidence of well thought out and analytical answers, with appropriate reference or quotation
- Teachers should encourage their students to display a greater awareness of some of the ambiguities and complexities involved
- In part (c) of each passage, at Higher Level, the student should be encouraged to offer a creative evaluative answer; marks will be lost for a general, descriptive summary
- At Ordinary Level, the examiners seek a descriptive treatment of the points the candidate makes. Students ought to be aware that quotations and reference are still expected
- Since the weighting for the essay question is considerable, students should be encouraged to engage more with the requirements of those questions
- There are many websites available which contain useful resources for teachers and students. The website maintained by the Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS) www.sots.ac.uk contains useful information and links. It is recommended that teachers and students make use of the resources on these websites.