

GCE



CCEA GCE AS
Exemplifying Examination
Performance
Religious Studies

AS 3: An Introduction to Themes in the
Old Testament

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EXEMPLIFYING EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE

GCE Religious Studies

Introduction

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Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

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GCE: AS Religious Studies

SRE31: An Introduction to Themes in the Old Testament

Grade: A Exemplar

Section A

Answer **one** question from Section A.

Q1a Examine the significance of Isaiah's call and his criticisms of Judah. [25]

Student's response

Isaiah was called to be a true prophet by Yahueh and remind the people that they needed to change their sinful ways and make a return to the mosaic covenant. Israel had accepted the privilege of being God's chosen but had neglected the conditions and deligations that had to be fulfilled, i.e. The Decalogue.

Isaiah's call demonstrates that even God's 'Chosen people' were not safe not protected if they were to depart from God's Covenant. Isaiah spoke 'words of Judgement', and proclaimed that 'God's Judgement was to be both punitive and purifying' (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, Petersen).

Isaiah is the first prophet to claim that there is a 'comprehensive and comprehensible plan that involves all creation'. This claims grows out of his call. After experiencing God's holiness, Isaiah participates in the deliberations for divine for a divine council. As a prophet, Isaiah was privy to 'divinely ordained plans for all humanity' and was 'charged with proclaiming what he knew (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, Petersen).

The people's long-term vecalatrance, in which they neglected God and failed to obey his commands, initiated the call of Isaiah had the task of leading God's chosen people through one of their most difficult periods. He believed the peoples real problem was their idolotary and failure to love their neighbour.

Isaiah received his call in the sanctuary of the temple. He was shocked by what he saw and heard, 'I saw the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up'. In response to this vision, Isaiah confesses his sinfulness and unworthiness 'Woe is me, for I am lost; I am a man of unclear lips'. Isaiah acknowledged that both he and Israel were sinners, and had failed to live out the mosaic covenant. In response to this confession, God sent a serph to touch the lives of Isaiah, with a burning coal from the altar. 'Behold' this serph has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sins are forgiven!! This was a symbolic action, which symbolised divine cleansing and forgiveness. It encouraged Isaiah to listen and he realised the chosen people were being allowed forgiveness, if they repented.

Isaiah now had the courage to prophesy and the desire to make great change in Israel. Through Isaiah, God sent a message to Israel denouncing their corruption.

Isaiah was warned that his mission to a people who were spiritually blind and deaf would meet with failure, but he was not deterred and continued with his mission. In response to Isaiah's question 'how long O'Lord, the Lord responded immediately and without hesitation, and Isaiah was told to continue prophesying until everywhere was devastated, and there was no people left in the land, 'until cities lie waste without inhabitant, he was to continue until the exile.

Examiner's comments

AO1: this response was graded as Band 4/18 marks.

This response understood the importance of holiness in Isaiah's call, and how Isaiah could do nothing to rectify his situation himself, but needed the intervention of God in an act of symbolic cleansing by the seraphim.

It also understood how Judah had departed from the requirements of the covenant, in terms of idolatry and failure to love neighbour.

The concept of the Divine Council was introduced, and crucially it was explained that Isaiah's call was to failure.

There was relevant and integrated academic quotation.

The response did not adequately deal with Isaiah's criticisms of Judah, referencing different aspects of injustice in society.

Q1b To what extent were the Covenants exclusive? Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

There is much debate centred around the question as to whether or not the covenants were exclusive. Through the Noahic, Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant, we see the change that emerges as God's message as universal to being directly for Israel.

The Noahic covenant was formed following the great flood sent by God, it is interpreted by many theologians as a 'Judgement of God on human sin. (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, Petersen. It was an unconditional and unilateral covenants that was initiated by God, the authority of the covenant resided in God. During the flood, it is God changes, and 'Yahweh Promises never to repeat this universal punishment (New Jerome Biblical commentary). Furthermore, Yahweh makes a covenant that involves all flesh and 'all successive generations', and therefore was a universal covenant that included all nations and all people. In addition, we see the sovereignty of Yahweh over all nations is proclaimed and we see him as the God of all three nations, Assyria, Egypt and Israel. Although Yahweh had struck the Egyptians in the past he would 'rescue' and 'help them' and 'these would be an altar to the land in Egypt. This, therefore indicates that Gods message was for everyone, and was not exclusive to one particular nation.

On the other hand, both the Abrahamic and mosaic covenant present 'Israels election by grace (Anderson), and Israel are elected as the chosen people. The Abrahamic covenant that God dictated with the people of Abraham and his descendants. The key to the interpretation of the ancestral history of the Jews can be found in this covenant, and the relationship established between God and Abraham, and subsequently the Jews was the result of divine initiative. Abraham's call signalled God's election of a divinely appointed land, Israel, thus they were the chosen ones and therefore led to the exclusion of other nations. Furthermore the act of circumcision that was to take place as a result of this covenant 'was the sign of a true Jew (Vawter), and it set Israel apart from other nations. Moreover, the conditional Mosaic Covenant, in which Israel was under obligations to live out the mosaic covenant, led to the belief among Israel that they were superior amongst other nations, and that they had Gods everlasting love and protection most importantly, they believed that God would never judge nor punish them. This belief, led to the subsequent exclusion of foreign nations, by the likes of Nehemiah and Ezra, who abhorred the fact that in Israel had not separated 'but mixed' with the peoples of the land. Nehemiah reinforced the exclusion of their nation by requiring Jewish men to 'send away Jewish wives they had married. Thus, the reforms introduced by both Nehemiah and Ezra were ones of purification, and resulted in the exclusion of not only non-Jews, but also Jews and can be seen as ethnic cleansing. The reforms were stimulated by the fact, Israel believed they were the 'chosen

people' and that they were 'special' as they were God's divinely chosen, elected through both the Abrahamic and mosaic covenant.

Examiner's comments

AO2: this response was graded as Band 5/23 marks.

Based on relevant analysis of the Noahic Covenant, this response identified the terms unconditional and unilateral accurately as it argued for the universality of God's concern for all nations, by demonstrating knowledge of how God was positively involved in the life of Assyria and Egypt.

It also understood how covenants were related to election and exclusion, as evidenced by discussion of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants.

The danger of how an ideology of separateness can lead to an outcome like ethnic cleansing was explored in connection to the reforms of Nehemiah.

Q2a “David lived in a time of great change in Israel.”

With reference to this quotation, discuss the reasons for the rise of kingship in Israel. [25]

Student's response

The reason for the rise of kingship in Israel came about when the Israelites asked Samuel for a king. They said “Give us a king who will reign over us, so we are like other nations.”

Samuel confronted the Lord, “the people have rejected me, they are asking for a king”. Samuel felt that the people were rejecting him as their leader but they were really rejecting God.

Then the Lord said, “I will anoint a king over them, but warn them that the king will claim over them, and they cry out for me, I will not listen”. The Lord then anointed Saul over them as king.

They cried to Samuel, “pray to the Lord your God for us, that we will not die”. This shows they feared what was coming to them, and also that they didn't believe in the on true God.

Saul claimed their land as his. He made their sons run in front of chariots, and their daughter perfumists.

This marked the beginning of the change from judgement to kingship in Israel.

The rise of the kingship of Israel then lead to the reign of David.

David lived in a time of great change in Israel, as there was geographical expansion, material prosperity and financial stability. These were some of the reasons for why the Israelites wanted a king.

There was a huge change in Israel at the time David lived there as David was then anointed king over Saul.

Due to Samuel's sons not living up to his level, as they accepted bribes and perverted justice, they could not continue the reign after Samuel.

Samuel mourned over Saul, the Lord said “how long will you mourn over Saul, fill your horn with oil and go anoint a new king.” This marked the beginning of reign for David.

Samuel went to Bethlehem, and Jesse, David's father presented his 7 sons to Samuel. None of the present sons were what God wanted. The Lord said “I don't look at what people look at, I look at the heart.” So Samuel then asked to see David, a healthy man who was fit for the throne.

David was then the new ruler of Israel, but Saul was still in reign as the Lord was still preparing David to take charge.

We can tell that yes, David did live in a time of great change in Israel as the symbolising of Saul's son, Jonathan, giving his mantle to David shows that even he wanted David to be king over his father.

Over all, David can be said to live in a time of great change in Israel, as there was a huge difference in the ruling of Saul compared to David's reign. We can tell the time of David was great as he had a special covenant with God and his name was established on the throne forever.

Examiner's comments

AO1: this response was graded as Band 5/21 marks.

This response identified how the call for kingship in Israel was initiated by the people because of the corruption of Samuel's sons. The perspectives of Samuel and God were outlined, and it was understood that the call for a king represented a rejection of the rule of God rather than of Samuel. The warning of how the king would behave was noted.

The transition in ancient Israel asked about in the task was properly identified as a move from rule by judges to the institution of kingship.

The movement of power from Saul to David was outlined, including how the significant changes overseen by David constituted great change from what had gone before.

The response would have been strengthened by inclusion of greater detail, more precision, and wider understanding of contextual factors.

Q2b In relation to the relevant texts, assess the view that David could do no wrong. Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

It was widely considered that when David was king he could do no wrong, and in this essay I will be exploring this view.

When David had resently been coronated to be king over Israel, he realised that Gods covenant did not have a grand place to rest, it was living in a tent. David realised that how could he a humble sheperd, who got lucky and ordained king, be living in a very grand palace of cedar being waited on hand and foot, while the precious covenant of God was living in a mere tent!

So David asked to speak to a prophet called Nathan, who would then enquire of God and see if he wanted a grand place to rest when not at war. Yahweh was very pleased that David had asked this, and God said that he would bless David with a long line of descendants.

Another story where David trully graced Yahweh was when the covenant was brought to its resting place. We realise through this story how serious David is about his love for God, but also how serious God is about demanding upmost respect at all times.

When the procession of people carried the ark of God, David meanwhile was dancing ahead of it, scantily clad some may say, which would land him trouble later; but David did not care who saw his because he wanted his people to know that he loved his God, but there was a small hitch.

As it was assumed that the ark was very heavy there were a multitude of men carrying it, but an oxen walking ahead stumbled and the ark began to fall. Uzzah, a bystander reached out to stop the ark from falling in the ground, but Yahweh found this as a great dishonour and that he was not respected so he killed Uzzah, struck him down for his supposed sin.

When I mentioned that David would get in trouble later, I meant when he got home to his darling wife, the daughter of Saul. She had been watching David as he danced around and sang from a palace window, and she said "how could you show yourself to slaves and daughters", but David knew this was not his objective. From that day forward Yahweh ? Davids 1st wife barren and she would not bare any children to him.

It is also widely considered that David could do no wrong as he was and still known as a rapist and a murderer. Of course these claims come from the story of David and Bathsheba, when he saw her bathing on the roof, he knew he had to have her for his own.

David enquired of a servant who the woman was and the servant replied “that is Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hitite. Despite the fact that David now knew that Bathsheba was married he still told her to come to him.

It is suspected that David raped her that night and he soon got word that she was pregnant. David knew that he needed to get her husband home to sleep with his wife, so that no one would know that their baby was in fact the kings son.

So David asked for Uriah to come back from war and sleep with his wife, but Uriah was a very loyal man who would not leave Davids side no matter what he tried; so there was only one thing left for David to do, he had to kill Uriah the Hitite.

He sent him back to the war, with a letter to his commander of the army that Uriah would be killed quickly.

To conclude, it is clear that in the beginning of Davids reign he was a true believer in Yahweh, and he did all he could to show God that he loved him; but when it came to near the end of his reign he became selfish and forgot his obligation to upholding the commandments of old.

Examiner’s comments

AO2: this response was graded as Band 5/21 marks.

In a balanced argument, this response used examples of how David was favourably viewed as showing commitment to God, before exploring how he went wrong, with reference to the various levels of wrongdoing in the David and Bathsheba narrative. It was presented that as David grew older he had more of a tendency to break the requirements of the law.

This response would have been strengthened by inclusion of some of obvious ways David is pictured in a positive light.

Section B

Answer **one** question from Section B.

Q3a For what reasons and in what ways did Elijah confront royal power? [25]

Student's response

Ahab reigned during the prophecy of Elijah. Ahab wanted to strengthen relationships between him and Tyre. Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre.

In order to make Jezebel feel welcome, Ahab built her altars for Ba'al and pictures of Ashtoreh. These were Jezebel's false gods that she worshipped. Jezebel tore down altars of the Lord. Whole sale apostacy soon threatened.

Elijah appeared on the scene like a meteor. He was appalled and stood up to the powerful Ahab and Jezebel when he said that the Lord wants no rivals. Elijah said "as long as the Lord lives whom I serve there will be neither dew or rain until I say". Worship of Ba'al was going on for 14 years. The Lord sent a drought that lasted 3 and a half years. Elijah confronted royal power by sending the drought, as only the Lord could control fertility, not Ba'al, and Elijah wanted to prove this.

God tested Elijah's obedience by telling him to "go east and hide in the brook at Cherith." He stayed there until told otherwise by the Lord. He was also fed by ravens.

He was then tested in Zaraphath, which was the land of Jezebel. He was to "stay with the widow at Zaraphath, who will provide food and water" for him.

The Lord then had enough. Elijah was sent to confront Ahab and speak to him, "you must go seek the king."

When Ahab saw Elijah he said "is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Elijah said no, it is you and your father!"

Elijah said "we will built two altars, gather all the prophets who eat at Jezebels table. We will build two altars and the God who answers by fire is the one true God."

Elijah challenged them and let them go first.

He poured 12 buckets of water on his altar to make it harder for God. Ba'al prophets were calling loud for long hours at their god, but no answer.

Then Elijah called and prayed quietly to the Lord and the altar went up in flames.

This proved to the Ba'al prophets that the one God is the Lord, Yahweh, they called out "the Lord he is Yahweh!."

This marks the time Elijah won over the royal powers apostasy beliefs.

Examiner's comments

AO1: this response was graded as Band 4/20 marks.

This response quickly and accurately identified apostasy and syncretism as the central issues confronting followers of Yahweh in the reign of King Ahab, and how this situation arose, including the practice of marrying foreign wives to cement alliances, and subsequently permitting them to build temples/shrines to their deities.

It then explored the appearance of Elijah, examining how he represented Yahweh as an alternative centre of power, especially in relation to the control of rainfall, and therefore fertility.

Building on this, the response outlined further ways Elijah confronted royal power, before exploring the narrative of the competition between Elijah and the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel.

This response would have been strengthened by a clearer analysis of royal power, and how it exploited rural peasants to benefit urban elites.

Q3b “Politics and religion have always been a dangerous mix.”

With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate this claim. Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

In this essay I will be exploring the claim that “Politics and religion have always been a dangerous mix”.

It is evident in Northern Ireland that our politicians, usually bring their religion to the table, when discussing new policies, but should they have the right to do this? I believe that they should respect everyone's beliefs not just their own fundamentalist Christian view.

Here in Northern Ireland, there was recently going to be a change in the law that equal marriage would be legalised here but the DUP, a Presbyterian protestant led group, put in a petition of concern, and as they are the largest party in Northern Ireland of course their view was listened to, who could ignore them?

Another issue has been addressed, by our very own glorious leader Arlene Trainor who has said in recent months, that she could never allow an abortion law to pass here in Northern Ireland due to her medieval views on abortion itself. She should have remembered that it is not only her own religion or constituency she is representing when talking on this platform, she is representing Northern Ireland anytime she speaks to a public audience.

Some people do however believe that by having such a Christian led government has kept abortion out of Northern Ireland and this is a good thing. Many protesting groups are thankful that we have an extremely Christian based assembly as we believe that abortion is wrong.

Another time where politics and religion have been a good mix is when in recent years many publications written by Pope Francis have been discussed in great detail. One document in particular, Laudato Si, has been very popular with governments all over the world, as it addresses very relevant claims such as global warming and poverty. As God is believed to have given us the world to look after, we see that the pope is right we should take better care of the earth and look out for those who truly need it.

To conclude, there are always mixed views on politics and religion as when people believe a certain thing why should they ignore their gut instinct when it comes to abortion or gay marriage but as this subject really hits close to home should it be considered right that politics really should not mix with religion?

Examiner's comments

AO2: this response was graded as Band 4/22 marks.

With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate this claim. Justify your answer.

This response addressed the task by initially exploring a relevant example in which the mix of politics and religion was viewed positively. Following this, three examples were examined in which politics and religion were perceived as a dangerous mix.

In the former category, it was argued that the political mobilization of those opposed to abortion had merit because the aim was to defend the intrinsic value of life, understood as made in the image of God.

In the latter, divorce, homosexuality, and sectarianism were cited as being examples of religion dangerously influencing politics because of how personal choice was limited, to the detriment of individuals and society.

Overall, the response presented two sides of the argument.

Q4a Explain and discuss the reasons for the view that Amos was a prophet of doom. [25]

Student's response

Amos is known as the 'prophet of doom'. His message came in the form of visions, with the visions representing God's judgement on Israel. Amos had the role of delivering God's message in hope the chosen people would change their ways and make a return to the covenant, 'the land had failed her sacred covenant with God, she must now expect and accept her just punishment (Winnad).

Amos had four visions. The first vision was one where he envisaged locusts destroying the crops, which the people depended on, which would consequently lead to a famine. God's message was to be as harsh as the locusts destroying the crops and the subsequent famine. The second vision was one where he envisaged a fire licking up the waters of the 'Great deep', and leaving a great drought. The exaggeration of the drought was to show people the extent of their sins. On both these occasions Amos interceded on behalf of Israel, 'O'Lord, forgive I beseech thee. Now can Jacob stand? He is so small, and on both occasions Yahweh relented. However, the third vision, would Yahweh use a plumbline, i.e. the Decalogue, to test Israel, if they were not up to his standards. They would be destroyed, 'I will rise up against the house of Jerusalem with a sword. This time, Amos did not intercede, now he was aware that judgement was both unavoidable and inescapable. The final vision saw Israel in destruction, and Yahweh would no longer overlook her wrongdoings, therefore, his punishment would be sent. Death is mentioned in this vision, but punishment and judgement was to be so drastic that there shall be mourning in the temple and 'dead bodies shall be many! The exile would bring death, and there was nothing the people could do.

Furthermore, Amos condemned the social and religious practices of Israel. He emphasised that cult of what could not be substituted for ethics, 'Amos said that God hated worship and ritual and it could not be substituted for the moral, personal and social relationships (Winnad). Moreover, he criticised their obsession with socialites, preclaiming that God didn't want hypocritical rituals. 'I hate I despise your feast. I take no delight in your solemn assemblies, but let justice roll down like water and righteousness like an everlasting stream! Amos denounced the fact the people oppressed and exploited the poor and needy among the people, and according to Drane 'social justice was not an extra to religious activity, but was at the very heart of it'. He emphasised that their little regard for the poor and their poor treatment, 'they have trampled upon the poor', had displeased and fuelled his anger in the Lord, and therefore, they would be punished by the exile, 'Jerusalem shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile'. Moreover, it was the greedy women who were blamed for this as they encouraged their husbands to amass wealth to satisfy their personal needs.

Furthermore, Israel believed the day of the Lord would be a day of great rejoicing and love. However, Amos' idea sharply contrasted to this, and said 'woe to those

who desire the day of the Lord'. Amos envisaged that the day of the Lord, eagerly anticipated as one where God would influence amongst the nations on Israel's behalf and bring them victory of their enemies, would be full of darkness, and light, defeat, and acts where God would fight against, not for Israel. Amos believed the day of the Lord would be a day of judgement and waiting, and Israel would suffer the ultimate punishment of the exile.

'Amos outlined the covenant stipulations of Justice and righteousness' and made it clear that 'no man could be in right relationship with God who is not in right relationship with his fellow men' (Winnad).

Examiner's comments

AO 1: this response was graded as Band 5/21 marks.

This response initially addressed the task by accurately explaining four of Amos' visions of doom, including how in the first two Amos' intervention and intercession with God averted the judgment pronounced; however, in the further oracles, judgment could no longer be averted. There was to be no last-minute reprieve and judgment was unavoidable, thus confirming Amos as a prophet of doom.

The level of social injustice was well presented as sufficiently serious and deeply engrained as to make judgment, understood as being sent into exile, irrevocable.

There was competent discussion of Amos' subversion of the concept of the Day of the Lord and how this underlined that Amos was a prophet of doom.

This response would have been strengthened by reference to the redaction of the ending of the book of Amos to include an element of hope in all the doom.

Q4b With reference to other aspects of human experience, comment on the view that true religion will always involve social justice. Justify your answer. [25]

Student's response

Since the Old Testament faith has always been used to address oppression and social justice in society. This is seen through prophets of the 800BCs such as Amos and Elisha, as well as in modern times through the work of religious times through the work of religious figures such as Oscar Romaro and Desmond Tutu. This essay will asses the idea the religion will always involve social justice.

In modern society religion has addressed social justice through the preaching of men such as Oscar Romaro. Romaro was a priest in 1980s South America, who was a founding member of Liberation Technology. Romaro's stance of social justice began after the army began to kill the poor in his home country. After speaking to The Pope to try and gain help (to no avail), Romaro used radio to preach a message of love and hope and peace to the people. Thus therefore shows how true religion will always involve social justice as it shows how religious figures must try and aid religious figures must try and aid the oppressed and fulfill a key message of the Bible, to love thy neighbours.

In addition to this, the view that true religion will always involve social justice is also seen historically through the work of Harriet Tubman. Tubman was a leading figure in the work to free black people from slavery during the civil war and was commonly referred to as the 'Moses' of her people. After the civil war she helped found a sect of the Presbyterian Church. This shows how historically, the view that a true religion will always involve social justice can be argued as it shows how for years people have fought oppression with the aid of their faith.

However, an argument can be made that there is no place for social justice in true religions. This argument can be made as it could be seen that just having faith is far more important than fighting oppression. This therefore would take a stance that by fighting for social justice through religion, the emphasis is taken off of god and hence no one is devoting themselves solely to faith.

To conclude, religions have since the beginning frequently involved fighting for social justice in their message. This, coupled with the idea that many religious figures have used their faith as a platform for social justice therefore shows its importance to religion. However, one must make sure that the faith is not lost in this fight against oppression.

Examiner's comments

AO 2: this response was graded as Band 5/23 marks.

This response started by making appropriate connection between biblical prophets and modern figures such as Oscar Romero and Desmond Tutu to support the case that religion will always involve social justice.

The ensuing discussion explored how the search for justice was a key aspect of biblical teaching and how both contemporaneously and historically, with reference to Harriet Tubman, faith has been important in opposing oppression.

However, to balance this argument, it was also observed that faith, without reference to the works it produces, is of central importance, and linking it to fighting injustice can dilute, distort, and diminish this.

Overall, this was a thoughtful and insightful response.

