

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

Cambridge International Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2015 series

9011 DIVINITY

9011/12

Paper 1 (Prophets of the Old Testament),
maximum raw mark 100

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Section A

Prophecy in general and Pre-canonical Prophets

1 'Samuel was a war leader rather than a prophet.' How far do you agree?

Arguments against might include the following:

- Samuel's birth and call, which indicated a prophetic mission in which he would take over Eli's priestly role, for example
- his role as a seer, which (1 Sam. 9) developed into a *nabi* might be seen as crucial: the role of the *nabi* in developing the monarchy and in putting in place a system of checks and balances on the power of the king
- examples of this with regard to Saul and David
- his role in relation to the prophetic guilds, etc.

Arguments in favour could include Samuel's role as a war leader in the fight against the Philistines:

- he was involved even beyond death given that Saul raises his spirit to consult him on the eve of the climactic battle against the Philistines
- during Samuel's youth the Philistines inflicted defeat on Israel at Eben-Ezer (1 Sam. 4), assumed control and captured the Ark, so from an early age Samuel may have been concerned to remove the threat
- when Samuel became judge of Israel, he assumed responsibility for oversight of the Philistine war, beginning with the sacrifice in 1 Sam. 7 and subduing the Philistine attack
- the election of Saul as king can be seen as Samuel using and controlling the monarchy in order to prosecute the Philistine war more effectively, uniting royal and prophetic power, and beginning with the successful thrust against the Ammonites
- similarly, for his own purposes, Samuel rejected Saul (for assuming priestly functions, 1 Sam. 13). This theme is continued by Saul's 'mistake' in being lenient with the Amalekites (ch.16).

It could be argued that Samuel combined both roles, since both were entailed by Samuel's prophetic vocation. Equally, it can be argued that Samuel's role was multi-faceted to include priestly and political functions.

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2 Consider the view that nothing can be known for certain about the origins of prophecy in Israel.

It is possible to interpret this question in a number of ways:

- it could be interpreted to refer to Ancient Near Eastern influences on the Israelite tradition, as seen with Wen Amon and the phenomenon of ecstasy, the mantic/*muhhum* prophets of Dagan during the time of Hammurabi, Hadad in the Mari texts, the different Baal traditions. Some might take it to refer to an origin through Moses during the wilderness period. Others will take it to refer to origins within the land of Israel.
- some will argue that Israelite prophecy is unique, specifically through Yahweh, moreover Deut. 18 forbids external influences. Uniqueness might be seen in terms of ethical monotheism
- responses could argue that prophecy began with Samuel
- some will argue for a combination of these ideas.

The focus of the question is on what can be known *for certain*, and for the higher levels, responses should offer some judgement on this as opposed to simply listing the various theories of origin.

3 Discuss the view that Elijah had more power than any other prophet.

Elijah's power might be interpreted in a number of ways:

- responses might discuss Elijah's power in terms of the ability to work miracles such as the drought (1 Kings 17), the multiplication of meal and oil (1 Kings 17), restoring life to the widow's son (1 Kings 17), the sacrifice by fire on Carmel (1 Kings 18), dividing the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 2), comparing these with miracles by other prophets, particularly Moses
- 'power' could also be interpreted in terms of ecstatic ability, closeness to God (e.g. the still, small voice), attention to social justice, renewal of the mosaic covenant, revival of Yahwism, his dealings with kings, the nature of his death and his place in later Jewish tradition as in the Transfiguration narrative. Most of these areas allow room for significant contrasts with other prophets.

For the higher levels, responses should offer some judgement on whether or not Elijah had 'more power' than other prophets, as opposed to simply listing Elijah's powerful words and deeds.

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4 In your view, which was the most important part of the message of the prophets: what they said, or what they did?

Discussion of the most important part of the message of the prophets might include:

- what they said, responses could consider any of doom oracles, salvation oracles, speeches, sermons, prayers, laments, wisdom sayings
- what they did, responses might look at miracles, symbolic acts and political acts.

Any judgement on the most important element in the message of the prophets can be valid so long as it is effectively supported.

5 Critically assess the problem of false prophecy in pre-exilic Israel.

Responses might include one or more of the following aspects

- a general overview of the nature of false prophecy, for example as discussed in Jeremiah 23, the general criteria being that false prophets have not stood in Yahweh's council to receive the divine *debar*/word, that they speak lying visions from their own hearts, that they prophesy peace when there is no peace, that they lead the people astray generally
- some will argue that false prophets are those who prophesy for money within the organised cult, e.g. those in Ahab's court in 1 Kings 22
- some might argue that induced ecstasy (as with the Baal and Asherah prophets on Carmel) is false whereas 'genuine' ecstasy, for example Elijah running before Ahab's chariot, is from Yahweh, or that false prophets are those attached to Baal, or to any god other than Yahweh, the problem being that the people had no way of telling true from false prophecy from any of these sources
- the problem is made worse by the narrative in 1 Kings 22, which suggests that false prophets are from Yahweh, so in this sense false prophets are true prophets.

Candidates are likely to discuss particular instances of false prophecy, particularly Jeremiah v. Hananiah or Elijah v. the Baal/Asherah prophets.

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Section B

Pre-exilic Prophets, with special reference to Amos, Hosea, Isaiah of Jerusalem and Jeremiah

6 Examine critically Amos' use of the idea of the Day of the LORD.

Amos is the first prophet to use the phrase, 'The Day of the LORD', and it is a lynch-pin for Amos' prophecies of doom to the Northern Kingdom:

- it is not a requirement, but candidates might offer some setting for the Day of the LORD, e.g. as an apocalyptic event in which it was expected that Yahweh would intervene in human affairs in order to punish Israel's enemies and elevate Israel to its rightful place at the head of the nations. It is generally interpreted as a theophany – an appearance of Yahweh in majesty/power
- the focal prophecies are in 5:18ff., where Amos says that it will be a day of darkness, rather than light, 'as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him'
- the phrase, 'On that day' occurs several times, e.g. 2:16 (the stout of heart fleeing naked during God's destruction of the nations); 3:13–15 (punishing the altars of Bethel/smiting the great houses); 8:1ff. (following the vision of the ripe summer fruit, the sun going down at noon, feasts turning into mourning, sackcloth, famine, thirst ...)

Almost all of the doom oracles can be seen in this context. The salvation oracle in 9:13, where 'that day' is reinterpreted, presumably by a later editor, in terms of a Davidic restoration could also be included.

7 Consider different ways of interpreting the message of the first three chapters of Hosea.

Responses are likely to refer to a combination of ways of interpretation.

- Hosea 1–3 can be interpreted either as an allegory of Israel's relationship with God, in which Hosea applies his real marital experiences to those of Israel and God
- alternatively Hosea invented the parallelism and used it as a metaphor for the purposes of illustration
- it is possible that the detail of the marriage is the inventive work of a later editor
- others consider that it could combine elements of both fact and fiction
- the problem with the realist interpretation is that marriage to a prostitute would have been a cultural disgrace and in contravention to the Law
- it might also be considered that even the metaphor would have been unacceptable
- the identity of the woman in 3:1 adds another layer to the problem in that it may still be Gomer, or else a second woman intended to reinforce the drama of the situation
- responses are likely to develop Hosea/Gomer God/Israel parallels. Gomer's adultery represents Israel's abrogation of the covenant while Hosea's rejection by Gomer represents Yahweh's rejection by Israel. Hosea's continuing love for Gomer represents Yahweh's continuing *hesed*/love for Israel, the love in both cases being unrequited. Yahweh's punishment is seen as remedial and not irretrievable, since Yahweh is *God, not man*
- some might suggest that the marriage material forms part of Hosea's call (possibly within the cult) and, as such, may have been formative in his attitude and message, showing the balance of love against judgement.

Balance of material is not important, the only requirement being for responses to show awareness of the different interpretations of the material.

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8 'Isaiah saw God as the Sovereign Ruler.' Show how this influenced his message.

- Isaiah's concept of God as Sovereign Ruler can be derived principally from his call in the Jerusalem Temple, where Isaiah had a vision of God as the exalted King
- from this, Isaiah understood that Yahweh had complete and universal power over all nations, all times, and the whole of creation
- Isaiah probably worked within the king's court, and prophesied during the reigns of Azariah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, so would have understood how the court functioned, and how international politics operated
- God's unquestioned power led Isaiah to hold that Jerusalem was invulnerable
- he developed the royal Davidic ideology to go with it, expressed in a series of oracles about the expected king (probably Hezekiah in the original context)
- from this, responses will show Isaiah's involvement in Judaeen history through the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, and his recommendations to avoid foreign alliances in the belief that dependence on Yahweh was more reliable.

9 'The fact that Jeremiah had an unhappy life made him a stronger prophet.' Critically assess this claim.

Assessment of this issue hinges on how candidates interpret particular aspects of Jeremiah's life in connection with his strength as a prophet. Responses might refer to some of the following:

- the details of Jeremiah's call show that most of it concerned suffering in some form, 'to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow'. Moreover in 1:18–19, God tells Jeremiah that he will be made into a fortified city/an iron pillar, meaning that he will need to be tough enough to tolerate the kings, princes, priests and people of Judah fighting against him. That God will fortify him makes him a stronger prophet as he has God on his side
- his 'confessions' show the unhappiness he suffered. During one of them he curses the day on which he was born (15:10), after which God tells him to be sorry for what he has said, and he will make him 'a wall to these people, a fortified wall of bronze' (v.29)
- the various threats against his life do not deter him, for example in ch.11, where God says that he will punish those who threaten Jeremiah
- his withdrawal from family life and friends meant that he had to be self-reliant
- when Pashhur has him beaten and put in the stocks, Jeremiah gives him a terrifying prediction that Pashhur will become a terror to himself and all his friends
- Jeremiah was able to stand up to the various kings of the time. For example, when Jehoiakim cut up the scroll dictated to Baruch, Jeremiah dictated another and told Jehoiakim that the Babylonians would destroy Judah so that there would be no king left to sit on David's throne (ch.36).

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Section C

REVISED STANDARD VERSION

10 Comment on points of interest or difficulty in four of the following passages (wherever possible answers should refer to the context of the passage but should not retell the story from which the passage is taken):

- (a) When you come into the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD; and because of these abominable practices the LORD your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.

(Deuteronomy 18:9–13)

The context is the prohibition against various magical practices.

Candidates might comment on some of the following:

- ‘burning sons or daughters’ probably refers to a test of dedication to the Ammonite god Molech, referred to in Jeremiah
- in the Samuel narratives, such practices were banned by Saul, although Saul himself went against the ban by raising the shade of Samuel through the services of the witch of Endor
- these practices are referred to as the reason why God allowed safe passage through the lands of the peoples who practised such ‘abominations’
- the extended context is the appointment of a prophetic spokesman, such as Moses, to proclaim God’s will
- true prophecy has to be consistent with Mosaic Yahwism, can’t contain ‘foreign’ practices and has to come to pass to be regarded as legitimate
- for false prophets, who presume to speak in Yahweh’s name, the punishment is death.

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- (b) Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: “Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have seen the affliction of my people, because their cry has come to me.” When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, “Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall rule over my people.” Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate, and said, “Tell me where is the house of the seer?” (1 Samuel 9:15–18)

The context is the choice of Saul as king (9:1–10:16).

Candidates might comment on some of the following points:

- Samuel was on his way to the high place, where he presided in a priestly manner over some form of sacrificial meal
 - the high places were later associated with pagan practices and were ordered to be destroyed (Deut. 12:2–3; 2 Kings 23:8–9)
 - Samuel received a revelation about Saul’s appearance the following day and was to anoint him as prince/*nagid* over Israel in preparation for his public acclamation as king in ch.11
 - comments about the status of Benjamin, least of the tribes of Israel (v. 20)
 - Saul’s position as the one chosen to confront the Philistine threat or details about the Philistines
 - ‘affliction, and ‘cry’ in v.16 referring to captivity in Egypt
 - the ‘gate’ was where justice was carried out so symbolizes the official nature of Saul’s approach to Samuel
 - details of the story of the seer (Samuel) and the lost asses, the ritual type of meal, Samuel’s anointing of Saul.
- (c) Then Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” Saul answered, “I am in great distress; for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams; therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do.” And Samuel said, “Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has turned from you and become your enemy? The LORD has done to you as he spoke by me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David.” (1 Samuel 28:15–17)

The context is Saul’s consultation with the witch of Endor (28:3–25).

Candidates might comment on some of the following:

- Saul’s desperation in being unable to talk to Yahweh through the usual channels – *Urim & Thummim*
- Samuel had died, so Saul’s main helper was lost
- Saul had banned witches and mediums so it is ironic that he now feels compelled to consult one of them
- the character of the witch, who subsequently is more sympathetic to Saul than might be expected
- the nature of the Philistine threat at Shunem
- Samuel’s anointing of David in preference to Saul
- Samuel’s reference to Saul’s disobedience as the root cause of his problems
- comments about the move from amphictyony to monarchy
- the disobedience concerning Amalek
- Samuel’s prediction of the loss of the battle.

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- (d) **And now, O LORD God, confirm for ever the word which thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house, and do as thou hast spoken; and thy name will be magnified for ever, saying, “The LORD of hosts is God over Israel,” and the house of thy servant David will be established before thee. For thou, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, hast made this revelation to thy servant, saying, “I will build you a house”; therefore thy servant has found courage to pray this prayer to thee. And now, O Lord GOD, thou art God, and thy words are true, and thou hast promised this good thing to thy servant; now therefore may it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee ...** (2 Samuel 7:25–29a)

The context is the narrative of David’s desire to build the Jerusalem Temple (7:1–29).

Candidates might comment on some of the following:

- the narrative is probably a later construction to explain why David was not chosen to build the Temple
- Nathan is used as the mouthpiece of the explanation
- the writer ignores the existence of the temple at Shiloh (1 Sam. 1:7; 3:3)
- the key to the text is the play on ‘house’, which in vv.1–2 means ‘palace’; in vv. 5-7,13 it means ‘temple’; in vv.11,16,19,25-27,29 it means ‘dynasty’
- the prediction failed since David’s dynasty ended in 587/586 BCE with the Babylonian invasion of Judah
- ‘LORD of Hosts’ (*Yahweh Sabaoth*), referring to God’s position as head of the heavenly armies (probably a title of Baal)
- the oracle is a thoroughgoing attempt to establish the Davidic theology found in Isaiah for example.

- (e) **For three years Syria and Israel continued without war. But in the third year Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we keep quiet and do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?” And he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?” And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.”**

And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Inquire first for the word of the LORD.” (1 Kings 22:1–5)

The context is the narrative of Ahab’s death in battle over Ramoth-gilead.

Candidates might comment on some of the following:

- continues the story of the Aramean (Syrian) wars from ch.20
- Ahab had quarrelled with the Syrian king over possession of Ramoth-gilead, a town east of Jordan
- Ahab now forms an alliance with Jehoshaphat, cemented by marriage
- Jehoshaphat is saying that Judah and Israel are in effect one people
- ‘inquiring of the gods’ was standard in ancient times before a battle
- Ahab’s court prophets prophesy victory
- Jehoshaphat is unconvinced and asks for a second opinion. Ahab mentions Micaiah ben Imlah but says he hates him because he never prophesies good for the king
- Zedekiah ben Chenaanah & the horns of iron: predicts they will push the Syrians to destruction
- Micaiah tells his vision of Yahweh’s council, in which Yahweh commands a lying spirit of prophecy to mislead Ahab’s prophets
- Micaiah is imprisoned. Ahab dies in the battle
- discussion of false prophecy.

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- (f) Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.’ ”

And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.” (Amos 7:10–13)

The context is the appearance of Amos, a southerner, in the Bethel sanctuary.

Candidates might comment on some of the following:

- Bethel was the royal shrine, and Amaziah its priest
- the preceding context is Amos’ visions of destruction
- it is presumably this announcement of destruction which Amaziah tells Jeroboam the land ‘cannot bear’ – Amaziah sees it as sedition/treason
- specifically, Amaziah says that Amos has predicted that Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will be exiled away from the land
- Amaziah calls Amos a *hozeh*/seer which might be seen as a professional title (cf. Samuel), the implication being that Amos is in Bethel in a professional capacity, acting as a cultic prophet
- the instruction to flee back to Judah and ‘eat bread there’ means ‘earn your living (as a prophet) there’
- the instruction never again to prophesy in Bethel, because it is the king’s sanctuary/the temple of the kingdom and so is outside Amos’ professional responsibilities
- Amos’ reply is often seen as an account of Amos’ call
- it is either saying that he is not a prophet, nor one of the sons of the prophets (guilds), but a shepherd taken from following the flock
- or else (if read in the past tense) claiming the opposite: ‘I was no prophet/one of the sons of the prophets but then God took me’
- Amos reiterates the threats against Amaziah and the land.

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(g) **“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“when the plowman shall overtake the reaper
and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.
I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant them upon their land,
and they shall never again be plucked up
out of the land which I have given them,”
says the LORD your God.**

(Amos 9:13–15)

The context is the prophecy of restoration at the end of the Book of Amos (9:11–15).

Candidates might comment on some of the following points:

- probably editorial, part of the post-exilic redaction of the Book of the Twelve
- hardly accords with prophecies of doom throughout the book
- uses typical language of Davidic theology in v.11
- typical symbolism of flowing wine
- restoration of ruined cities implies a situation after attack and exile by Assyria
- images of land husbandry and peaceful pursuits
- emphasis on the theology of the land
- ‘never again’, although the prophecy was false
- some might argue that the section is from Amos on the grounds that he did intercede successfully in his earlier visions, so his work is not all doom and gloom
- comment on the oracular formulae.

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(h) Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of compassion,
with the bands of love,
and I became to them as one
who eases the yoke on their jaws,
and I bent down to them and fed them.

They shall return to the land of Egypt,
and Assyria shall be their king,
because they have refused to return to me.

(Hosea 11:3–5)

The context is 11:1–7: as a loving and patient father, Yahweh must discipline his disobedient son.

Candidates might comment on some of the following issues:

- ch.11 is often seen as a summary of the main theme of Hosea's book - ascent (through the election, Exodus and Conquest), election as adoption hence 'sonship', rebellion, descent into apostasy and exile, restoration after punishment to the love of God (God's *hesed*)
- this section begins with the reference back to the Exodus event
- v.1 – 'out of Egypt I called my son' – cf. Exod.4:22, where Israel is described as God's first-born son
- but Israel was disobedient/sacrificed to the Baals/burned incense to idols
- yet it was Yahweh who as the father taught Ephraim to walk
- but the children (the people) did not know that it was Yahweh who healed their hurts
- 'led them'/'compassion and love'/'bent down and fed them'/'eases the yoke' – as in the Exodus
- 'return to the land of Egypt' – back to the start of the Exodus cycle
- 'Assyria shall be their king' – invasion and deportation by Assyria, 721 marking the end of the Northern Kingdom.

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(i) The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

(Isaiah 2:1–3)

The context is Isaiah’s prophecy of the ‘new age’, in 2:1–5.

Candidates might comment on some of the following points:

- the first line of the extract is a second superscription, perhaps for chapters 2–4
- the oracle is largely replicated in Micah 4:1–4
- ‘word’ as *dabar* means message/oracle
- it announces a new age in which Zion (Jerusalem) shall be elevated (‘shall be established as the highest of the mountains’) – mountainous areas were thought to be the realm of the gods so Zion being the highest mountain means literally that it is closest to God
- the nations will acknowledge this and will ‘flow’ to it to pay homage to the God of Jacob (Yahweh), in order to be taught ‘his ways’ i.e. God’s law and commandments
- ‘out of Zion shall go forth the law’ – having evangelized the nations, law (i.e. the Jewish Torah) will spread out and down to all nations
- ‘and the word’ – the law will be accompanied by ‘the word’, i.e. the prophecy itself
- comparison with the Transfiguration narrative, which shows a similar personification of law and prophecy in the persons of Moses and Elijah
- the oracle goes on to discuss the age of peace that will follow.

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- (j) Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
 and before you were born I consecrated you;
 I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”
 Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.” But the LORD said to me,
 “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
 for to all to whom I send you you shall go,
 and whatever I command you you shall speak.
 Be not afraid of them,
 for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.”
 Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth ... (Jeremiah 1:4–9a)

The context is Jeremiah’s call in ch.1.

Candidates might comment on some of the following points:

- comment on the ‘word of the LORD’
- consecrated as a prophet before birth
- prophet to the nations e.g. Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Judah
- comment on the objection part of the call structure (‘I am only a youth’)
- God’s assurance that he will supply whatever is needed to back up Jeremiah’s deficiencies
- ‘touched my mouth’ – symbolic of putting the prophetic *dabar*/word into Jeremiah’s mouth – he is commissioned by this. In 15:19 God tells Jeremiah that if he stops uttering nonsense, he will again ‘be as my mouth’
- compare also Isaiah’s call narrative, where Isaiah laments that he is a man of unclean lips, whereupon one of the seraphim purifies his mouth with a burning coal: ‘your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven’
- the commission which follows to pluck up and break down, destroy and overthrow
- prediction of the foe from the north and Yahweh’s strengthening of Jeremiah as a fortified city, iron pillar.

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- (k) Thus says the LORD:
 “A voice is heard in Ramah,
 lamentation and bitter weeping.
 Rachel is weeping for her children;
 she refuses to be comforted for her children,
 because they are not.”

Thus says the LORD:
 “Keep your voice from weeping,
 and your eyes from tears;
 for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD,
 and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.
 There is hope for you future, says the LORD ...”

(Jeremiah 31:15–17a)

The context is the ‘Booklet of Consolation’ (30:1–31:40) and Rachel’s lament for the exile of the northern tribes.

Candidates might comment on some of the following points:

- oracular formulae
- 30:8 has referred to ‘that day’, so presumably Jeremiah is talking about the reversal of the doom oracles connected with the Day of the LORD in Amos, seen also in the editorial comments at the end of Amos, so restoration is promised in 31:16ff.
- Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin (Gen. 30:22; 35:16–20)
- she laments the children of the northern tribes as they are her descendants, exiled to Assyria after the invasion and defeat of 721
- Ramah, burial place of Samuel, north of Jerusalem. It was used as a transit point for deportees after the Babylonian invasion of Judah (Jer. 40:1)
- the first half of the extract is quoted in Matthew 2:18 in connection with Herod’s killing of the first-born at the time of the birth of Jesus
- the second part is presumably addressed to the exiles – there will be restoration after the ‘work’ of staying intact during exile so ‘there is hope for the future’
- the hope is for Ephraim as well as Judah (v.20 – ‘my heart still yearns for him’).