

THE 48TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

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There was no less excitement about the annual Bible contest for Jewish youth this year although there were only 28 countries represented rather than the more usual number (prior to the global economic situation which began about three years ago) of 34 countries which in the past sent us contestants. Forty eight young people came and participated in the pre-contest, limited to those from overseas, which was held this year in the town of Ariel. The twelve contestants who scored the highest appear on stage and on television to compete against the four top Israeli contestants on Yom Ha-Atzma'ut, Israel Independence Day. The Israeli contestants had their own Bible contest a few weeks earlier in which their top four contestants were chosen to compete against the 12 from the Diaspora. The winner of the Diaspora contest was Orly Lokeir from Mexico, the runner ups were Joshua Kayf from Canada and Sharon Mukhpara from Panama. Although the USA sent in contestants this year none of them managed to reach the top three spots.

The *Hidon* received a lot of publicity last year because one of the top four Israeli contestants was Abner Netanyahu, the Prime Minister's son. In addition to the extensive publicity, last year we were pleasantly surprised when the TV authorities permitted the *Hidon* to be covered beyond its usual two hours. We had thought that the reason was because of the fact that Netanyahu's son was involved. However, the generosity of the broadcast authority also extended to this year, probably because they discovered that the *Hidon* program's ratings were rising every year and faced no serious competition from other channels during that time slot. Again our *Hidon* was given an extra half hour or even forty minutes to the regular two hours which had been allotted to us in earlier years. This time extension was fortuitous because after the first three rounds two of the Israeli contestants were tied: Shlomi Adelman from the Shalavim Yeshiva and Noam Hadad from the Bnei Akiva Ulpana in Hadera. The tie forced them to go to a fourth round of a head to head competition from which Shlomi emerged the winner by one point. He was declared the *Hatan Hatankh*, and despite the fact that Noam lost by one

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point it was decided to grant her the title of *Kallat Hatanakh* (Perhaps this was done on the urging of the chief judge, Yitzhak Navon, a former President of Israel, who wanted both to be declared the winner already after the third round.)

As usual there were speeches by Brigadier General Shermeister (responsible for IDF education), Gideon Saar, the Minister of Education, Benjamin Netanyahu and the special speaker, Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Jewish Agency.

There are several organizations which are responsible for the organization of the annual *Hidon* with the major responsibility falling on the Israeli army's Education Department with the cooperation of the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemet*), Department of Education and our Bible Association which publishes the Jewish Bible Quarterly.

Since all the contestants who come here for a two week period are delighted with the experience, which involves field trips to places of biblical interest, Jewish schools in the Diaspora are encouraged to publicize local Bible contests and help prepare at least two or three promising students for regional contests with the hope that they will have acquired sufficient knowledge to eventually be sent to Israel to compete in the annual contests. Each Jewish high school around the world, and even private teachers, can receive a list of the biblical chapters on which the contest will be based. Students, whose knowledge of Hebrew is insufficient may study and take exams in their own languages both in their home countries and in Israel.

There are many individuals who contribute to the success of the *Hidon* year after year. In addition to the questions written by Mr. Yosef Shaar and Mr. Pinchas Neriah, Mr. Shaul David works on the program behind the scenes *Hidon* coordinator and advisor and Dr. Avshalom Kor, the veteran radio and TV personality, has been the public conductor of the contest for many years and does so in the most interesting and professional manner.

For further information about the *Hidon Hatanakh* contact your local Jewish Agency representative or go to website <http://www.jafi.org> searching for the term: Bible Contest.