

THE FIFTY-FIRST INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH 5774

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The fifty-first year of the International Bible Contest (*Hidon ha-Tanakh*) for Jewish Youth took place as usual on Israel Independence Day, televised and broadcast live. This year, 71 young contestants from 33 countries participated. They were joined by four Israeli youngsters, the top four in the Israeli Bible contest which had taken place a few weeks earlier. The winner of that contest was Itamar Kalifa. Prior to the Independence Day contest, the pupils from various countries were given a written exam from which the top 12 contestants were chosen to face the four leading Israelis pupils. Over the past 35 years questions for the written exams were devised by Mr. Yosef Shaar z"l, who passed away recently, and Mr. Pinhas Neriah has now undertaken the writing of questions for the Diaspora contestants as well as those asked during the entire contest. The winner of the Israeli contest, Itamar Kalifa, came in third in the international contest after the runner-up, Tefilah Berenson, also of Israel. Eitan Amos from Toronto, Canada, was this year's Bible champion. It has been at least twenty years since a non-Israeli was the contest's *Hatan ha-Tanakh*.

This year it was decided that Israel's Department of Education will assume chief responsibility for organizing the annual *Hidon* rather than the Israel Army, as in former years, although the IDF is still very much involved in making the *Hidon* a national event. Also contributing to its success is the deft handling of the proceedings by the contest's master of ceremonies, Dr. Avshalom Kor.

The first speaker this year was the new commander of the Army Education Corps, General Avner Paz-Tsuk, who was followed by the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Natan Sharansky, and Minister of Education Shai Piron. The chief judge at the contest was Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein. I had the honor this time of being one of the assistant judges. Unlike last year, however, when there were several challenges regarding the number of points awarded

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or as to whether a contestant's answer was correct, there were no such issues this year and so we judges had no hard decisions to make.

The classic Bible contest traditions were maintained. In the first round of the contest every one of the sixteen contestants are asked a question via short educational films, a procedure which has been the practice now for several years. Also, as every year all the contestants are given tours of the country to sites connected with the Bible, a day on an army base and visits with various government leaders such as the Prime Minister and Education Minister.

The annual *Hidon* is sponsored by several organizations including the government's Education Department, the IDF, the Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemet*) and the Jewish Agency. Jewish communities around the world are urged to prepare pupils for local Bible contests wherever they are held or to prepare pupils privately so that they can become future participants in the international *Hidon*. Pupils may study the Bible either in Hebrew or in their native languages. (During the written exam in Israel and at the Independence Day contest there are always translators for anyone speaking a language other than Hebrew.) For further information about the contest contact a Jewish Agency representative at www.jafi.org



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