

THE 52nd INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH 5775

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The 52nd annual International Bible Contest for Jewish Youth (*Hidon ha-Tanakh*) took place in Jerusalem on Israel Independence Day with the participation of 76 young contestants from 33 countries and 4 from Israel who scored highest in the local Bible contest for Israelis. This year many former Soviet-bloc countries were represented, including Latvia, Russia, Poland, Romania, and Belarus. The crucial final round was between 15 year old Eyal Matas of Rehovot (from the Darchei Noam school in Petach Tikvah) and 17 year old Yisrael Elgrabi of Jerusalem (from the Horev school in his home town), with Eyal Matas emerging as the winner. This is the first time that there was a sole Israeli winner in a few years. Last year the title went to the Canadian Eitan Amos, and in 2013 there was a tie between Elior Babian from Israel and Yishai Eisenberg of New Jersey.

The theme of the contest was the ingathering of the exiles, which was also the theme of the ten questions asked by Prime Minister Netanyahu to the last group of contestants. A special guest, who sat on the dais, was Bat Galim Shaar, the mother of Gilad, one of the three young Israelis kidnapped and then murdered last summer by Palestinian terrorists. Yuli Edelstein, the speaker of the Knesset, was again the chief judge (with one of his assistants being the writer of these lines) and like last year there were no unusual problems that needed to be decided. The master of ceremonies was Avshalom Kor, a veteran of many Bible contests by now, and the writer of the questions was Mr. Pinchas Neriah. Brig. General Avner Paz-Tsuk (who heads the army education department) and Natan Sharansky, chairman of the Jewish Agency, gave talks addressed to the contestants. Sharansky mentioned that even during the seven week war against Hamas last summer Israel welcomed several thousand new immigrants which came as a surprise at the time to many who deal with immigration to Israel.

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

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educational films, a procedure which has been the practice now for several years. Also, as every year, before the contest itself 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, Education Minister, and President Reuven Rivlin.

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 in communities where 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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