

THE FIFTH ANNUAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR ADULTS

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The Fifth Annual *Hidon Hatanakh* for adults was held during Hanukah at the Binyanei Ha'umah in Jerusalem. There were twelve contestants – all Israelis – (ten men and two women) with several hundred Bible lovers in the audience. Although it was once decided by the *Hidon* committee that the adult contest should be international and open to adult contestants of all religions for some reason or another this goal was not implemented since only Israelis were contestants.

The Hanukah candles were lit by Prime Minister Netanyahu who in his speech referred to the recent discovery of the seal of the Jewish King Hezekiah described in our *Tanakh* which is another proof of our connection with the Land of Israel. Netanyahu's speech was then followed by a talk by Naftali Bennett, the Minister of Education. Both Netanyahu and Bennett gave much praise to the late Yitzhak Navon for pressuring the government over the years to reinstitute the adult *Hidon* which was discontinued four decades ago. Israel's only annual international Bible contest which has been going on for over the past fifty three years, has been the international Jewish youth contest on Israeli Independence Day.

Among the contestants was a blind senior citizen, Rahamin Darshan, who on the basis of the earlier written Bible exam was chosen to be among the twelve contestants for the first round. (Combined with his earlier written exam, he did not have sufficient points to continue against those with more points.) All the contestants, prior to the *Hidon* itself, were asked who their favorite Bible personality was. The most common answers of the contestants were Moses, David, Solomon and Saul. Mr. Darshan's answer came as a surprise since his selection of his favorite biblical personality was the Kohen Yehoyada (II Kgs. 11:9).

There were five short educational films which were interspersed between the questions which were quite interesting, and included such personalities as the founder of the Bet Yaakov school system for girls, the Maharam, Shmuel Hanagid and the Jewish community of Cochin. Unlike the films at

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the Youth *Hidon*, the connection between the filmstrips and the Bible contest did not seem connected to the questions the contestants were asked to answer.

There were several innovations at this year's contest such as having the questions in the first round distributed a few minutes in advance and the contestants were able to write the answer to their individual question and read it so that the judges and audience would hear it. Another innovation in this year's adult contest which differed from the usual way the Youth *Hidon* is conducted was that in the second round the six who had the highest points in the first round (which included also their scores in the previous written exam) all had to answer the **same** set of questions orally, quickly and correctly while the other five contestants were out of earshot until it was their turn to come to the stage to answer the same set of questions.

After the first round the six contestants who were left displayed remarkable knowledge of biblical texts and were able to answer over 95 percent of the questions thrown at them. After the Prime Minister's question there were two contestants who were most outstanding and were able to answer not only all the regular questions Mr. Neriah Pinchas had prepared for the contest but an extra fifty or so questions he had prepared in case there was a tie. Sure enough there was a tie which resulted in their being two winners: Ms. Yafit Soliman of Kfar Yavitz became the *Kalah* of the *Hidon* and Mr. Levi Sudri of Bet Shemesh who became the *Hatan* of the *Hidon*. We really witnessed an outstanding example of biblical knowledge by these two winners which in baseball language went into extra innings.

The next Bible contest for adults will take place on Hanukah 2016 and for those interested in becoming contestants see the website www.edu.gov.il/ibc