

THE 39TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

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Despite Arab terrorism, relatively few Diaspora contestants cancelled their trips to Israel for the Contest, held in April 2002. As usual, the Contest was in two parts. First there was a session for Diaspora contestants, all of whom had won local contests in their home countries. These young people were treated to tours of Israel, and meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and the Chief Rabbi. Their first round of the Contest was held in Kiryat Shemona. First place was shared by Yaakov Frydman Kohl from Toronto and Yael Landman from Brooklyn, NY. The four highest-scoring contestants then joined with four Israeli students in the full Contest held in Jerusalem on Israel Independence Day.

In the International Contest, first place was also shared by two contestants, both Israelis from the Negev region: Meir Ben-Admon of Beersheba and Avihai Sheli of Netivot. Avihai is both deaf and blind, and studies the Bible in braille. His achievement was remarkable, as were those of past champions Orit Turin, who is blind, and Shai Hason, who has cerebral palsy. The runners-up in this year's contest were Meir Ben-Dror of Israel and Yaakov Frydman Kohl and Moshe Halpern, both of Canada.

It may be noted with pride that Israel celebrates its independence not with military parades but with Bible study and cultural events such as the award ceremonies for the Israel Prize, to honor scholars, scientists and artists for their achievements. The harsh necessity of defending itself against terror does not deter Israel from its real national commitment, which is to Torah and to culture.

Each year, the Contest supplies Jewish schools in the Diaspora with a list of biblical books and chapters to figure in the next competition. Students not proficient in Hebrew can study these materials in their own languages. Thus, Jewish schools around the world can form study groups to prepare students to participate in the series of competitions.

For further information, contact the local Jewish Agency representative or write to Yitzhak Ben-Ari, Department of Jewish Zionist Education, POB 92, Jerusalem, Israel.