

THE 41ST ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

JOSHUA J. ADLER

One of the key celebrations of Israel's Independence Day is the live televised Annual Bible Contest for Jewish Youth held in Jerusalem with the participation of the Prime Minister (who asks the final question), the Speaker of the Knesset, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Minister of Education, Army Chief Rabbi, and other dignitaries. This year, 51 high school students from 27 countries who had won their country's Jewish Agency sponsored regional Bible contest participated in the preliminary special contest for Diaspora youth held in the Israeli town of Ariel. Guest of honor was Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz who asked the final question. The winner of the Diaspora Contest was Yoni Halpern of Canada with second place taken by Yael Landman of New York. They and ten others who scored the highest points at the Diaspora contest participated in the main contest on Independence Day along with four Israeli high school students who had scored highest in the local Bible contest for Israeli youth.

All 51 Diaspora as well as the four Israeli contestants met with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who mentioned the eternal connection Jews have with the Land of Israel with many of the ancient place names still the same as in biblical days; indeed, he said the best tour guide to the land is the *Tanakh*.

This year's winner was Israeli high school student David Tsur-el with Yoni Halpern of Canada coming in second. The contest is supported by the Army's Education Corps, the Ministry of Education, the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund *Keren Kayemet*. Jewish schools in the Diaspora are encouraged to have their students participate in their country's regional Bible contests. Schools receive a list of biblical books or chapters on which the contest is based and students may study and take exams in their own languages both in their home countries and when they arrive here.

For further information about the Contest, contact your local Jewish Agency representative through <http://www.jafi.org.il>

Joshua J. Adler is the Managing Editor of the Jewish Bible Quarterly.

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