

# THE 45TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

**JOSHUA J. ADLER**

Sixty-one students from 36 countries came to Israel for the two-round Annual International Bible Contest [*Hidon HaTanakh*] for Jewish Youth. Prior to the public contests, they took a written exam on the chapters they prepared for in their own communities. The first rounds of the contest were then held separately for Israelis and for participants from the Diaspora. For the Israeli students there was a three-way tie for first place among Zurit Berenson, Liora Bach, and Eliad Finish. For the Diaspora students, first and second places went to Rivka Witte from Toronto and Dov Nadel from Detroit. The second round of the contest, for Israeli and Diaspora contestants together, was held on Independence Day and first and second place were won by Zurit Berenson and Eliad Finish.

All of the contestants toured the country, and met with President Shimon Peres in his official residence, and with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Minister of Education Yuli Tamir in their respective offices..

One of the special things about Israel is that its Independence Day is observed not by military parades but with a Bible contest in the morning and the Israel Prize ceremony in the evening for cultural and scientific achievements. There are many organizations that each year put together the annual *Hidon* that is featured live on Israeli TV and radio, and foremost among them are the Israeli Defense Forces' education department, headed by Brigadier General Eli Shermeister; the Jewish Agency; the Jewish National Fund's Department of Education; and our own Jewish Bible Association.

The students who come to Israel to participate are delighted with their experiences here. Jewish schools in the Diaspora are encouraged to publicize the local contests and help to prepare at least two or three promising students for regional contests that select those who will go to Israel for the *Hidon*. Each Jewish high school around the world or even private teachers can receive a list of the biblical chapters on which the contest will be based. Students whose knowledge of Hebrew is insufficient may study and take exams in their own languages both in their home countries and in Israel.

In the U.S. regional contests, each participating school is assigned a geographic region, with one to three other schools, and each year a champion is selected for the region. Each region has four divisions, one each for Middle School, High School, Bible Studies in Hebrew, and Bible Studies in English. Students from all fourteen regions study throughout the year and national finalists advance to the United States National *Hidon*, held annually in May in New York City. In 2007, 171 students competed in this national contest. First- place winners in each of the four divisions of the national competition are the U.S. representatives to the International Bible Contest held yearly in Israel.

For further information about the *Hidon HaTanakh* contact your local Jewish Agency representative or go to its website <http://www.jafi.org> or access the American website of the Bible Contest: <http://www.columbia.edu/~ycg2001> .

For the syllabus, access <http://www.columbia.edu/~ycg2001> and click on CONTACT US.