

# THE 46TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

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This year, because of the global economic situation, only 24 countries participated in the Israel Independence Day *Hidon HaTanakh*, instead of the usual 34-35 countries, with 47 contestants rather than the usual 60. However, we were pleased that Sweden and Switzerland were represented for the first time.

One of the two main themes of this year's *Hidon* was the need for social and economic justice based on Psalm 85:11. The other was the 100th Anniversary of the founding of Tel-Aviv, then the only all Jewish city in the world. This might seem rather extraneous to the *Hidon*, since the name Tel-Aviv appears only once in the Tanakh and that is for a town in Babylonia (Ezek. 3:15).

Participants from the Diaspora come for two weeks, during which they have field trips to places of biblical interest. During this period, they take a written examination and then go on to a special contest among the Diaspora students. This year, first place went to Doron Sultan of New Jersey, and second place to Amram Littel of Canada. Israeli contestants are chosen by a separate first-round contest, and the two groups then compete together in the *Hidon*. In this final round, first place went to Sapir Malka from Kochav Yaakov and second to Uri Luvish from Beth-Yatir, both in Yesha. Of the Diaspora youth, Doron Sultan came in fourth. Also, Noa Bloch, a 15-year-old girl from Australia did quite well in the contest, as her three siblings had done in previous *Hidonim*.

Many individuals contribute to the success of the *Hidon* year after year. Among them are Yosef Shaar and Pinchas Neriah, who compose the questions, Shaul David, behind-the-scenes *Hidon* coordinator and advisor, and Avshalom Kor, who has conducted the contest for many years in the most professional and interesting manner.

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It was particularly satisfying this year that the television coverage let the *Hidon* run beyond the standard two hours, probably because of its high-rating with viewers.

All the participants were treated to visits with the President of Israel, Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Minister of Education, Gideon Sa'ar. They also met with IDF Chief-of-Staff Gabi Ashkenazi, who spoke about how the Tanakh slowly began to influence his personal life and career as a soldier.

One of the special things about Israel is that our Independence Day is observed not with military parades, as in many other countries, but with a Bible contest in the morning, and the Israel Prize ceremony in the evening which honors individuals for their cultural and scientific achievements.

Of the several organizations involved in organization of the annual *Hidon*, the major responsibility falls on the IDF's Education Department with the cooperation of the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet), Department of Education, and our own Jewish Bible Association

Jewish schools in the Diaspora are encouraged to publicize local Bible contests and help to prepare several promising students for regional contests. Some of these will qualify for inclusion in the *Hidon* in Israel. Jewish high schools or private teachers can obtain a list of the biblical chapters on which the contest will be based. Students with limited knowledge of Hebrew can study and take exams in their own languages both in their home countries and in Israel.

For further information about the *Hidon HaTanakh* contact your local Jewish Agency representative or go to the website <http://www.jafi.org> and search for the words Bible Contest.