THE 44th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH

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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, the Israel Defense Forces' Chief Rabbi, and other dignitaries. This year, 61 high school students from 34 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 city of Safed. The winner of the Diaspora Contest was Yakir Forman of Teaneck NJ. He and twelve 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. Prior to the public contests all the participants take a written exam on the 400 chapters of the Bible they prepared for in their own communities. This year for the first time, Colombia, Macedonia and Peru sent in contestants.

This year's contest had two top contenders (the Israelis Yishai Gaspan and Tamar Kronman) who tied for first place and the two had a face-to-face confrontation answering a dozen questions in rapid succession. The contest judge, former president Yitzhak Navon, declared Yishai Gaspan the winner. The contest is supported by the IDF'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