

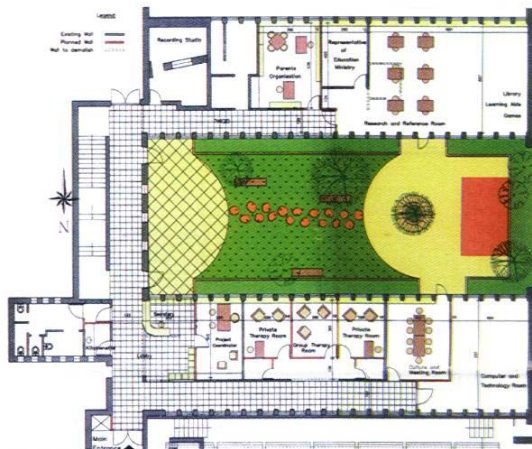
Be-yachad or Working Together for the Blind

A new central service center at the Institute called *Be-yachad* is a project designed to serve blind and low-vision children and adolescents as well as their families. The *Be-yachad* or 'together' project will provide additional services in the fields of education, rehabilitation, therapy and socialization.

Blind students today are encouraged into their local educational frameworks, and this center will help them meet with their sight-impaired peers, learning from each other how to deal with mutual problems. *Be-yachad* will also serve as a research and reference center for those working with the blind, providing state-of-the-art computer and technological assistance. A diagnostic unit will be established, and there will also be office space for a parents' association, giving them a place to meet as well as to receive professional guidance. The *Be-yachad* Center is established in conjunction with the Ministries of Social Welfare and Education as well as Joint – Ashalim in order to provide a wide spectrum of services under one roof.

The center will be available for the 2,000 blind and partially sighted that live in and around Jerusalem. Students living further afield will be invited for seminars or enjoyable courses in order to help them integrate more successfully in their respective communities.

A wing of the Institute's classroom building is already undergoing renovation in order to properly



Architect's sketch of Be'yachad Center at Institute

house the *Be-yachad* premises. Although many activities are already taking place, full implementation of the project will begin in September 2001. These complementary services to the blind will enable the Institute to serve all of Israel's blind and visually handicapped as well as their family members.

One of the Institute's Most Outstanding Employees

For most of her adult life Devorah Auerbach has been part of the community of the Jewish Institute for the Blind. As a young woman she began working in the office, married, had children and left the Institute temporarily to be at home with her babies. A favorite of both students and staff members, Auerbach came back to work, and now as a grandmother many times over, she is slowing down a bit, although not officially retiring.

As the administrative head of the Jewish Institute for the Blind, Auerbach's office is the first place that one turns with a problem or question, and oftentimes, she can solve any dilemma herself. She has maintained relationships with former students for decades, and after her day's work at the Institute, she volunteers with several elderly blind women.



Devorah Auerbach

History at the Institute

"When I started working here, the Jewish Institute for the Blind was one of the tourists' first stops in Jerusalem," says Auerbach. "We barely had typewriters in those days, and the children learned to write Braille by hand as we did not yet have Braille machines. We had a sense of mission, however, and we knew that our work was truly important for Israeli society." Auerbach has not yet forgotten that morning in June 1967 when Jerusalem came under

attack by Jordanian forces during the Six Day War. At the Institute, she helped all the pupils to their respective shelters, and made sure that everyone was well protected, and only then she and a co-worker ran to their own homes and families. Auerbach returned home only to learn that the co-worker had been killed by a Jordanian missile.

"Just as the Jewish Institute for the Blind is a part of Jerusalem's history, it is a big part of my life," she explains. "The Institute has grown and developed, and the physical situation has certainly improved, but I miss the days when our offices were cramped in the classroom building, and I had more contact with the students."

Although Auerbach will lessen her work load at the Institute, she does not plan to cut her ties. "From my earliest days here, I felt like my work with these children was a calling, and I feel like there is still work yet to do."