

JIB Honored at Presidential Celebration

A Jewish home always has a mezuzah or the words of the Lord on the doorpost of his house. "Just as a person stretches out his right hand to kiss the mezuzah when he enters the house, the Institute at the entrance to Jerusalem is like the mezuzah, reminding us of the charity of the Almighty," explains Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi Doron, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel. One of the many rabbis and impressive guests honoring the Jewish Institute for the Blind, the festivities toasted the Institute in honor of a century of service. The President of the State of Israel, Moshe Katsav, hosted a reception for students, staff and friends of the Institute at the President's official residence. A festive day, a day of retrospection as well as a day of fun for the students as they wandered through the garden of the President's home, touching and 'reading' the facial features on busts of the former presidents.

Perhaps this visit to the President's home was a first for the students, but President Moshe Katsav visited the Institute in 1987 as a young cabinet minister. "I am deeply impressed by the wide range of activities for the blind, and I welcome the initiatives made at the Institute", Katsav wrote then. He complimented the Institute fifteen years ago, and again at the reception he reiterated his words: "One hundred years ago, Jewish settlers thought to establish this Institute, and it shows Jewish sensitivity to mankind."

Holding up a large book that was presented to him at the ceremony, President Katsav added: "This heavy volume is full of Jewish law and commentaries on the blind and blindness – a very small but important part of the Jewish tradition. The Hebrew volume entitled the "Sefer Ha'Suma" (Book of Blindness) was published by the Institute in honor of the 100th anniversary. Compiled by Aryeh Rodrigez, it is a compilation of blindness as it is mentioned in Jewish sources.

Many other speakers gave impressive accounts of the Institute through the years, and musical accompaniment at the reception was provided by Meir Barabi, a former graduate of the Institute as well as a talented musician. In addition to his renditions, a song of well known Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer's was performed in honor of the Institute and its students.



Israel President Moshe Katsav (rt.) is presented with album of photographs taken during his visit to the Institute in 1987 when he served as Minister of Labor & Social Service



Director's Corner

We are all proud of the work that has been done at the Institute in the last few decades, but as we look back at the history of the JIB, it is really with an expression of awe and inspiration. The Jewish Institute for the Blind in Jerusalem, the oldest school for Jewish blind children in the world, has developed and changed over the years, but we hope it will continue to serve the blind and partially sighted population with renewed efforts.

The reunion that was held at the Institute this spring was an event that we can all be proud of. We received positive responses from the day invitations went out, and over 600 students and friends met at the day-long activity at the Institute. It was very obvious that there is a need for more meetings of this type, as friendships made after years spent at the Institute are cherished.

Also the honor bestowed upon the Institute by Israeli President and Mrs. Moshe Katsav was heartwarming as well as rewarding. As the President remarked: "there are many institutions in Jerusalem, but the Jewish Institute for the Blind is certainly a landmark and a place of which to be proud." We hope to continue to live up to our reputation, continuing to serve the blind and partially sighted population of Israel for the next hundred years. We look forward to a century of change and new developments with the continued support of our friends.

Chaim Reshelbach,
Director