



INSIGHT

news from Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem

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Elementary Education Reaches Out to Younger Pupils

"In opening up elementary school classes for a new population, we are able to provide educational opportunities for a younger group, giving them a head start in development," explains Rachel Skrobish, Director of the Institute's Department of Education and Rehabilitation. In former years, most students began studying at the Institute from fourteen years of age, but as the JIB is known for individual attention to every child and their personal needs, there has been demand to open a younger division. "Today, two classes are devoted to younger children," according to Skrobish, "and the Institute has new staff members as well as playground equipment and tools to help the children develop their spatial awareness."

Lilach Odesser, the special education teacher for one of the new children's classes is literally her pupils' connection to the world. She works intensively with two students of ten years of age as they both suffer from serious visual and hearing disabilities. She can see the development each child is reaping from this individual attention, and she understands their feelings and needs. Although S. has both serious hearing and visual impairment, he is beginning to acquire certain words, and he is learning to recognize the world around him. His classmate E. is also making headway, and one of his clearest words is S' name. Both pupils are thriving in the class, and even though they commute daily,



their parents as well as their educators are very happy with their progress.

"All of our pupils have an individually tailored curriculum and the new students are beginning to develop and grow," explains Lilach. "Although it is important that these pupils live at home with their families, they are benefiting from being exposed to such intensive learning at an early age."

Terror Strikes in Neighboring Institution

Just as we go to press on this Passover issue of Insight, a horrible terrorist attack has left eight young boys dead at the neighboring institution of the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva. A gunman entered the library of the yeshiva on Thursday, March 6 as the boys were preparing for a party celebrating the first day of the month of Adar (as the festival of Purim falls in this month, it is considered to be one of the most joyous in the Hebrew calendar). The terrorist shot hundreds of bullets, killing eight students aged 15 – 26 and maiming many others before he was killed.

Not only was the attack very close to the Institute, but our students were also in the midst of the hubbub as dozens of ambulances and police cars rushed to the scene. Police gave security instructions to lock doors and turn out lights, and the students were alarmed. Staff members calmed them down, and many prayed for the souls of the dead and the recovery of the wounded. Our sympathies and condolences are with the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva as they bury their young students, many of whom volunteered at the JIB and had personal relations with our students.



Israel Celebrates Sixtieth Anniversary Year

As the State of Israel prepares for an exciting sixtieth anniversary celebration, the Jewish Institute for the Blind is proud to look into our annals and find some of

our most interested and appreciative visitors....Israeli President Shimon Peres visited the Institute years ago. Just look at his impressions:

"I was deeply impressed by this unique educational facility – by the push to build, the concern for each and every pupil, and the enthusiasm of the directorship. The Institute is indeed a source of light and warmth to those whose vision has been extinguished; there is light here which returns one's faith in mankind."

*With all respect,
Shimon Peres*

Israel's current Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has also visited the Institute. Here is his entry in the Visitor's Book:

"A handicap – blindness—can be perceived as an opportunity just as it can be seen as a threat. The ability to cope, the desire to strive, strength to believe...these make the difference. A visitor to the Jewish Institute for the Blind is impressed by the optimism, the love and the encouragement that is given to every child to believe in his ability to live a life of value and happiness."

*With blessings,
Ehud Olmert*

May this 60th anniversary year mark a year of hope and success, peace and security for the State of Israel. May the Jewish Institute for the Blind also continue in its work -- over a century of love, dedication and education to the blind and partially sighted of the State of Israel.

One of the Institute's Outstanding Employees

Lilach Odesser began working at the JIB as a counselor in the Institute's boarding school, and when new classes were opened, she was immediately chosen as the new educator on staff at the Institute's school. With her degree in special education and lots of hard work, she has developed quite a rapport with the new class of younger pupils.

"I have developed a strong rapport with the younger class, and I think that the students are developing their knowledge of the world around them. Most important is language acquisition, and we



Lilach Odesser

are working on that daily," she explains. "The Jewish Institute for the Blind has so many resources to offer to these new pupils, and I am proud to be part of the team working with them."

Lilach's days are long and intensive as she serves as her students' connection to the world and the Institute. In addition to girls who volunteer in a national service program, Lilach has a lot of support and assistance from the entire staff of the Institute. "My days are full with this class, but I am proud to feel like I am making a difference in their lives."

Spotlights

❁ Not only did Shachar turn 13, but he was honored to a wonderful bar mitzvah ceremony this year at the Institute. Shachar was called to the Torah at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and he joined with family and friends celebrating together at the Institute with speeches, skits and a specially prepared joyous meal. Shachar was also fitted for the meaningful gifts of a prayer shawl, tefillin and a new suit for the ceremony.



Shachar's bar mitzvah ceremony at the Western Wall

❁ Snow blanketing the hills of Jerusalem is always a spectacular sight, but this year it afforded Institute pupils a two-day break from school classes. There was lots of fun building snowmen and sledding over the grounds of the Institute. Of course warm soup and lots of extra curricular activities were also in store for the students.



Jerusalem snow day was great fun for Institute pupils and counselors alike



Director's Corner

As a person ages, his failing eyesight can be very troublesome. Every year at the Institute, more and more activities help the visually impaired elderly deal with their problems. Not only are they invited to a summer retreat at the Jewish Institute for the Blind in Jerusalem, moreover, they are remembered during the year as well. This Pesach, the traditional gift of 'kimcha d'Pischa' or financial assistance will help 200 elderly blind families put special food on the table, giving them an extra treat.

In addition to helping the elderly, problems of visual disabilities continue to plague the young infant population of Israel. The Jewish Institute for the Blind has developed a reputation over the past years as an educational institution that goes the extra mile to help every pupil. In order to meet a pressing need in Israel, we have opened classes for younger pupils, and these new students are being absorbed into our student population.

We invite you to take an active role in helping us to help the blind and partially sighted of Israel. On your next trip to Jerusalem, we look forward to inviting you to the Institute to meet our students and staff.

May you and your family have a very happy Passover season.

Chaim Reshelbach, Director

Recent Visitors to the Institute



ENGLAND

Mr. Charles Lossos, London



FRANCE

Mr. & Mrs. Franck Douieb, La Varenne
Mrs. Paulette Gravier, Mézières, S/Seine
Mrs. Myriam Nathan, La Varenne
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Zimmerman, Paris



GERMANY

Dr. Angelika Jäger, Würzburg
Mr. Alfons Regnet, Berlin



HOLLAND

Ms. Naomi Italiaander, Amsterdam



NORWAY

Mr. & Mrs. Harry Rödner, Snaroya



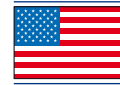
PANAMA

Mr. & Mrs. Isaak Tarazi & Family, Panama City



SWITZERLAND

Mr. Robert Equey, Geneva
Mr. Alain Köstenbaum, Geneva
Dr. & Mrs. Jakob Silbiger, Basel



UNITED STATES

Mr. & Mrs. Yoram Amihud, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Mr. Zev Berman, Jamaica Ests. NY
Prof. Lea Gilon, New York City
Mr. Motti Meisels, Valley Village, Ca.
Mr. Zev Meisles, Valley Village, Ca.
Mrs. Eva Morgenstern, Long Beach, NY
Mrs. Brenda Tawil, W. Long Branch, NJ

COME TO VISIT US

On your trip to Israel we would like to welcome you at our campus situated in Kiryat Moshe, 8 Degel Reuven Street at the entrance of Jerusalem.

To arrange a visit please call:
02-6599501



Bouncing on a camel's back on recent spring tour



Bi-annual Newsletter

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Jewish Institute for the Blind

serving Israel's blind, visually impaired,
and multi-handicapped
over 100 years

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Insights from Abroad

The new auditorium of the Jewish Institute for the Blind has been refurbished and is now a state-of-the-art facility that seats 235 comfortably. The new facility has been dedicated to Alter and Hanna Kacyzne who were killed in the Holocaust. Alter Kacyzne (1885-1941), a central figure in Warsaw's Yiddish cultural world, died during the Ukrainian pogrom. His wife, Hanna, died in the Belzec death camp. The auditorium was made possible by the Asul Foundation through the efforts of attorney Alain Köstenbaum of Geneva.

The French organization supporting the efforts of the Institute, *Les Amis de l'Institut des Aveugles de Jerusalem*, has been formalized. This group is presided over by Myriam Nathan and was founded by her husband, the late Eddy Nathan, z'l. We hope for continued success through their efforts.