

## Brightening the Darkness



PLAYTIME AT JEWISH INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND IN JERUSALEM SHARPENS MOTOR SKILLS FOR SIGHTLESS YOUNGSTERS, INSTILLS PRIDE IN ACHIEVEMENT. INSTITUTE'S 50 RESIDENT CHILDREN AND HUNDREDS OF OTHERS ARE AMONG BENEFICIARIES OF UJA/COMMUNITY 1983 ISRAEL SPECIAL FUND.

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JERUSALEM, Israel -- For the first four years of her life, Sara's world was a corner, a rag doll her only company. Ignored by seven brothers and sisters, barely acknowledged by her mother, like a small, frightened animal, Sara sat, sightless, alone.

Yossi's mother died in a car accident when he was a baby,

leaving nine children behind. Yossi was born blind. His father had no use for an "imperfect" child.

Avi, a teenager, knew for some time that his advancing blindness would one day be final and irrevocable, but it's a fact of life he found extremely difficult to accept and deal with. How can you give up the sky?

Today, Sara is not alone. Yossi has found a home where he is wanted. And Avi is beginning to under-

stand that the gathering darkness need not leave him helpless.

They are among 50 children suffering from total, partial or advancing blindness who are living and learning to help themselves at the Jewish Institute for the Blind in Kiryat Moshe, Jerusalem -- supported in part by funds from the United Jewish Appeal 1983 Israel Special Fund.

Like many of their resident classmates, Sara and Yossi and Avi have more to overcome than blindness. Sara is retarded and has autistic tendencies. Yossi has speech and physical coordination difficulties. Avi entered the Institute in a state of severe anxiety and depression.

Alone with his completely blind classmates, Avi is learning to read and write in Braille, to operate special typewriters and to use a comprehensive Braille library; a new world opening up to him as the world of sight closes down. Extensive counseling and psychological services have softened

the acuteness of his depression.

Sports and music activities, combined with patient speech therapy, have strengthened Yossi's coordination and sense of self. Judo instruction has given him a feeling of control and confidence. He is learning carpentry, ceramics and weaving and will be well trained to make a living in the outside world.

Sara has no time to sit apart and never feels alone now. Uncertainty and loneliness fade in the face of group learning experiences, individual grooming help and summer camp fun. There is no stigma of retardation in her slow movements during the sewing and home economics classes; each newly learned motor skill is a landmark triumph.

Mobility training is the key to progress for the Institute's blind children. Today, Dov, who has been blind from birth and has taken unaided steps only within the confines of the Institute, faces a crucial test. His "lesson" is to walk to the corner grocery store and to buy himself any candy he wants -- a wonderful treat for any

eight year - old.

He is learning to guide himself with the white cane of the blind. His instructor follows at a discreet distance, flinching with each obstacle encountered, but allowing the boy to find his way and his satisfaction for himself. Dov's world is expanding, brightening the darkness.

The 50 children living and learning full-time at the Jewish Institute for the Blind are exceptions to the prevailing rehabilitation pattern in Israel. Most handicapped children in the Jewish state today live and are cared for within their communities, if at all possible. Educators believe this process of "mainstreaming" is more beneficial because it allows the children to lead as normal a life as they can.

Blind children who are mainstreamed have special tutors who begin instructing them in basic life skills at an early age. Special kindergartens are being accommodated in regular neighborhood schools.

Many who live at home in and around Jerusalem come to the Institute in the

afternoon for special after-school instruction in dealing with their individual needs. The Institute also offers evening courses for blind adults, helping them develop new skills and experiences. Many richly contributory lives have been fashioned by these part-time programs.

But for the Saras and the Yossis, the Avis and the Doves -- those who are not wanted at home, who have additional physical or emotional problems, who need intensive individual training, or whose homes are in outlying areas where adequate facilities are not available -- the brightness in Kiryat Moshe that dispels darkness is the full-time answer.

Life at the Institute is full for these small souls -- full of learning, hope and warmth. They are valued and appreciated for what they are. They are taught and encouraged to be whatever they can become. Their every resource is developed. They learn to live in spite of their handicaps.

They are what is special about the Israel Special Fund.

**I KNOW  
WE SHOULD GO TO  
THE FUNERAL HOME**



**BUT, I NEVER KNOW  
WHAT TO SAY.**

The fact is that nothing can be said to express adequately our loss or make the bereaved family feel better. But that doesn't mean that a visit and an expression of sympathy won't be helpful. Bereaved persons tell us that it's not the words that are helpful but that someone cared enough to go to the funeral home and express their sympathy in person. Sometimes just a hug or holding your friend's hand briefly is a good way to say "I care." When a friend loses a loved one go to the funeral home. Express your sympathy and offer your assistance. You'll be appreciated for caring.

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