



# INSIGHT

news from *Jewish Institute For The Blind, Jerusalem*

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## High Tech Takes Over

Humming with activity, the computer department of the Jewish Institute for the Blind is gearing up for the third millennium! Not only does state-of-the-art equipment catch the eye and imagination of a visitor, but the youngsters are always eager for new games and experiences. Today the computer revolution has not left the blind in the dark, and students at the Institute utilize magnified printers (for partially sighted students), talking monitors and Braille display so that students can type on the keyboard and read through Braille what they have written.

According to Nechama Lev-Ari who co-ordinates the computer department of the Institute, the present computer revolution is particularly a godsend for the sight impaired. In this day and age, the technology exists to enable the blind, like their sighted peers to maneuver virtual race cars around obstacles on the screen. Lev-Ari appreciates the cognitive functions that the students can obtain with the new computer technology.



*Computer usage for the blind is possible with the use of a Braille display keyboard*



*Virtouch computer equipment enables a person to feel what is happening on the computer's screen under his fingertips*

"Our classes are tailored for each student's level," explains Lev-Ari. "At the most, I can work with four or five students at one time, and they are constantly processing new information." Lev-Ari uses the computer as an educational tool, helping the pupils acquire information and learn through elimination, how to make decisions. "We also use regular programs so they will feel at ease with the computer, understanding computer usage," she adds.

In an interesting partnership between the Institute and the Israeli firm of Virtouch, advanced computer programming and hardware is being used at the Institute to the mutual advantage of the high tech industry as well as the students. Virtouch, based in Jerusalem, has developed remote tactical access which gives the blind user the feeling of having the world 'under his fingertips'. The person using the 'mouse' or remote control of the computer actually can feel graphic shapes through his fingertips.

"The Institute has benefited from the close proximity to the Virtouch research and development center, and I think the company has learned quite a bit by working closely with our pupils and educators."