

Bar Mitzvah — Meaningful Celebration for All



Beza and Avi are praised at Bar Mitzvah celebration by Rav Gazit

One of the best examples of the close ties that form among the boarders is a recent Bar Mitzvah that was celebrated at the Institute. Two boys, both immigrants to Israel—Avi from the former Soviet Union and Beza from Ethiopia, memorialized this important milestone in their lives with friends at the Institute as well as their families that came for the festive occasion.

Avi and Beza put on their phylacteries for the first time at the Western Wall, and their proud families and all the students were on hand as Avi read the Torah portion. Later everyone continued the celebrations with a festive meal

complete with music and lots of fun. Special contributions helped make their day even brighter, and Jerusalem merchants donated suits for the two boys and various Bar Mitzvah gifts including talking alarm clocks and watches. Invitations were donated, flowers helped to brighten up the Institute's hall, and a photographer and musicians also contributed their services.

The celebration was an outpouring of love and shared camaraderie with the two boys, and it illustrated again the close relationships that are formed after living and studying together at the Institute. A hearty mazel tov or congratulations to Avi and Beza and their families on the celebration of this milestone.



Beza is called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah

One of the Institute's Outstanding Employees

You certainly don't need to be talented to love art, and I look for projects that give the pupils a sense of satisfaction, explains Rachel Kastenboim, longtime art instructor at the Jewish Institute for the Blind. A look around the art classroom at vivid wall hangings, paper mache projects in various stages of completion, brightly painted ceramic Hanukkah menorahs and lovingly fashioned straw dolls illustrates just how much the students love Rachel's classes.

The blind share the same aesthetic feelings as everyone else, and they are proud to bring home their art projects to their families and friends, adds Rachel. Obviously they enjoy the classroom work and not just the finished project, because students constantly find their way into the art room when they have a free period to work on a project. In



Rachel Kastenboim

addition to her training in art and special education, Rachel brings a sense of purpose to her work at the Institute.

Rather than seeing work with the handicapped and blind as special education, I feel that every job has to be broken down into simple tasks. One of the designs depicting intricate ceramic

figurines also begins with pieces of clay that are rolled into fingers before the more delicate clothing is fashioned, explains Rachel. Everything is a process. Rachel is full of praise of the work of her students, and she gives a great deal of credit to the fact that she has excellent materials at her disposal. We are very fortunate that we can obtain raw materials from the carpentry and metal workshop at the Institute.

The art works of Rachel and her students overflow the confines of the art classroom, and today they decorate many halls and offices at the Institute. Exhibitions are also eagerly awaited by students, parents, and the Jerusalem community. Rachel finds her satisfaction, however, from the fact that she helps her students — one step at a time — to creative expression and independence.