



B. A. BIMAH

News, People, Events, Information and Jewish Life in Brooklyn Heights

A publication of Congregation B'nai Avraham
 117 Montague St. • Brooklyn NY 11201
 (718) 596 4840 • <http://www.bnaiavraham.com>
 President: Stephen Rosen • Rabbi: Aaron Raskin

Adar/Nissan 5766 #1

Bereishit...Baruch Hashem

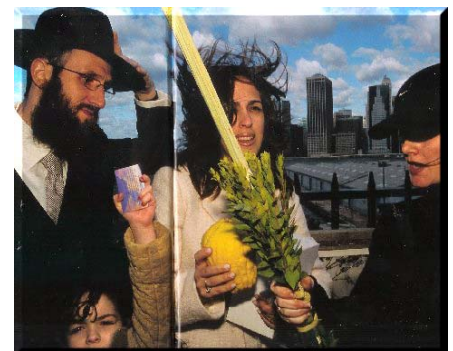
17th ANNIVERSARY SHUL DINNER
 March 8, 2006
 Jewish Children's Museum
 792 Eastern P'way cor. Kingston Ave
 (718) 467 0600
 6:30-8:30 PM Stroll 9-10:30
 \$250/pp
 Honorees:
 Ethan and Deborah Ehrenberg
 Dr's Daniel and Silvia Blaustein
 Rita Battles Pres/CEO LICH

Date	Parsha	Leiner	Haftorah	Kiddush
3/4	Terumah	Sam Shnider		
3/11	Tetzeveh	Levinson	S. Cohn	
3/18	Ki Sisa	Avram Abramowitz		
3/25	Vyakhel Pekudei	Rabbi Raskin	R.Raskin	R.Raskin
4/1	Vayikra	Ilan Scharf	M. Weinberger	
4/8	Tzav	Avram Abraomowitz		

This year's annual shul dinner will be held on Wednesday, March 8, 2006 at the Brooklyn Jewish Children's Museum. This is the major fund raising event for the synagogue, and consequently no efforts have been spared to make it a memorable evening. Ethan and Debra Ehrenberg are being honored with a special Aliyah Award, and Daniel and Silvia Blaustein will be receiving the Kiddie Korner Parents of the Year Award....As we have done in the past, the synagogue will acknowledge its close relationship with Long Island College Hospital, by honoring one of its physicians or faculty. This year, Rita Battles, the President and CEO of the hospital, will be recognized for her outstanding

contributions to the community. Many of the other physicians and staff are also expected to attend....The event is black-tie optional. There will be an open bar, a fabulous buffet dinner (including sushi!) and music. Either before or after the speeches, guests will be encouraged to take a tour of the museum....Steven D. Cohn is the chairman of the dinner committee, and he will make sure that everyone who has ever set foot in the synagogue or has ever been connected with the community attends the dinner. Anyone unable to afford the ticket price is urged to speak with him or Stephen Rosen privately so that no one is left out....Richard Golden is the editor of the dinner journal. Please contact him immediately to run your ad as the deadline for inclusion will be at or near the time you are reading this publication. The ads are a vital part of fundraising effort, and package deals are available.

Below photograph as seen in National Geographic, February 2006 in the article entitled: *A faith grows in Brooklyn*: Rabbi Aaron Raskin the spiritual leader of Congregation B'nai Avraham with his wife Shternie and daughter Chayah and congregation member Sheila Bar-Levav performing a ritual using the symbols of the holiday.



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Profile on Shternie Raskin
Interviewed by Moshe Golik

Rebbitzin Shternie Raskin welcomed me into her office in the shul. Amidst answering the telephone, observing troops of children walking up and down stairs and viewing the building security monitors, she gracefully responded to my questions.

Q: Other than marrying a rabbi, how does a rebbitzin become a rebbitzin?

SR: At the Bais Rivka Seminary, we all learned to be emissaries of Yiddishkeit. Even as little girls we trained to be speakers and well grounded members of an outreach program. Yes, I married young, but we grew up together. Our marriage is a partnership.

Q: How does that partnership manifest itself on a weekly or monthly basis?

SR: We love this community. Our home is open not only for Shabbat and holidays, but also daily. The Rabbi and I individually and together counsel men, women and families in religious and family duties. The Lubavitch movement educates us, prepares us, and motivates us. We view the religion as a ladder of mitzvot. This ladder allows everyone to rise, rung by rung, at his or her own pace.

Q: How can an orthodox shul representing a 3500-year-old religion connect with doctors, lawyers and real estate chiefs?

SR: Even in our modern age, Orthodox Judaism is appropriate. It is vibrant, alive and resonates with everyone; all you need is a spark of Yiddishkeit. The religion will embrace you.

Q: Congregation B'nai Avraham has been in existence for 17 years. What are your goals for the future?

SR: We would like to bring more Jews into the shul. We want to connect more. There are so many families here with the Jewish spark or with one parent Jewish. They are welcome here. Our Kiddie Korner program is available to their children. My husband and I would

like to touch every Jew in the neighborhood.

The Grey Zone:

BECOMING RELIGIOUS IS A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS. BUT FEW TALK ABOUT THE WEIRD SOCIAL SPACE YOU MAY WELL BE ENTERING WITH EACH NEW STEP. WE CALL IT "THE GREY ZONE"—Mike M Bast

Consider: We received an invitation to my father's 75th birthday party. My folks know that we are Sabbath observers, so the party was planned for a Sunday. Unfortunately, that Sunday will be Tisha b'Av. What should we do?
Signed, BT at BA.

Dear BT:

Man you got me. That's a good one. Of course it's your own fault. If you had explained the laws of every major Jewish holiday to your folks, this wouldn't have happened. Maybe you could go to the party, stuff cotton in your ears so you don't hear any music, and pretend to have a horrible toothache which prevents you from eating....No, that's no good, I have a better idea. Tell everyone in the room about Tisha B'Av, and explain how today is a fast day, and remind them that they really shouldn't be eating, either. Wear a terrible disapproving frown on your face the whole time, to commemorate the day. Have fun! No, I mean don't! Sincerely, The Grey Zone
P.S. OK, REALITY CHECK. There is no good solution. Laws will be violated or feelings will be hurt or both. If you elect not to go, be there in spirit. Send a gorgeous gift and a telegram, video, or picture which can be read or shown at the party in your absence.

Grey Zone Tip of the Day: Eating in a Treif Restaurant

This year my mother-in-law took the whole family on vacation to the Sonoma valley in California, making dinner reservations for eleven of us at the most

expensive establishments. Yountville, by the way, has many five star restaurants, but none of them is kosher. I planned ahead, and called Kosher.com and ordered five self-heating boxed meals. None of the fancy waiters flipped out, and I wore my kippah proudly. The whole family had a good time. This was a Grey Zone Victory....But what if you can't plan ahead, and for certain reasons you must go into a treif restaurant? Try yogurt, cottage cheese, ice cream, pre-wrapped pastry, or cereal. These products almost always have a hechsher. And wear a baseball cap over the yarmulke....
What if these choices are not possible and you are forced to go one more level down? You can order a cold salad, with a can of tuna. (And waiter, please ask the chef to cut the tomatoes with a clean knife!)...Do you make a bracha over your food or not? Our solution: Have a glass of water first. Make a "shehacol" over it. Then everything you have afterward slides right in under that blessing. Whew!...[Maybe you have a situation or advice you'd like to share? Address all in inquiries to the Grey Zone. Include your own answers, because we don't have any. Legal Disclaimer: This column has not been read or approved by any halachic authority.]

IFAR (International Foundation of Art Research article): A LOOK BACKWARD AND FORWARD ON HOLOCAUST-ERA ART LOOTING AND RESTITUTION ISSUES—by Jonathan Senkar: Brooklyn Law School

Ed. Note: Mrs. Nicholas has granted special permission to reproduce her full length article of 15 page. She has agreed to be a guest speaker at our synagogue. Call Dr. Ted Rothstein if you would like to have a copy.

In the 1990's the issue of looted Holocaust era art became a hot topic, with particular significance for Jews. No doubt inspired by efforts to recover Jewish assets "lost" in Swiss banks, some began to ask why nothing had been done before to return stolen

artwork. However, according to art historian and author Lynn Nicholas, the notion that nothing had been done to recover Holocaust era art was a misconception that surfaced in the sensational news coverage of recent recovery efforts. In fact, by Nicholas' account, probably around 85% of the stolen art was returned by the 1950's...As Nicholas describes in her article in last Fall's IFAR Journal (International Foundation for Art Research), the effort to return artworks displaced during World War II began immediately after the war, when the artistic treasures of Europe were spread far and wide. The story how and why, as Nicholas puts it, "almost every work of art in Europe was in the wrong place in 1945," was mostly untold until Nicholas, her interest piqued by the obituary of a French Resistance member known for her efforts to save artwork, delved into the topic herself. What emerged was a narrative of art and culture mixing with ideology, avarice, and surprising resourcefulness.

The force that prompted the upheaval of European art was the Nazi state. Nazi officials, including Hitler, took a serious if perverted interest in art, and saw to it that the treasures of occupied Europe were sent from their respective homes to serve the cultural aspirations of the Nazi Reich. As with all facets of life in Nazi Germany, ideology played a central role in this effort. The Nazi regime divided art into "degenerate" and pure—a frightening reflection of their division of people between those pure and those (principally the Jews) whose existence they could not tolerate. Anything abstract or created by a Jewish artist was "degenerate" and had to go. The Nazis were not above taking cash for these artworks, however. Among the pieces sold in unsavory deals that took place as the Nazis unloaded "degenerate" art was Ernst Ludwig

Kirchner's *The Street*, sold for a song (\$160) to the MoMA.

There was resistance, of course. Curators hid paintings, and some dealers "saved" artwork by having it given to them to sell to other countries. In preparation for war, the caretakers of Rembrandt's *Night Watch* rolled up the famous painting and evacuated it from its home in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. In London, artwork was stored in subway tunnels (along with the city's population at times). Nicholas also describes instances where the art trade became a means of survival. Max Friedlander, a famous Jewish art scholar, was pulled from concentration camps twice by Goering, who needed his expertise to verify the authenticity of stolen paintings.

Ultimately, over 16,000 works of art were purged by the Nazis, and many more were displaced across Europe. The work of returning the stolen art after the war was a vast project, and provides perhaps the most interesting (and least known) part of Nicholas' story. In 1943, still during the war, the Allied governments in London declared art sales made with the Germans during the war illegal, setting the stage for repatriation. After the war, the stolen art of Europe was found hidden in remote castles, mines, and farmhouses, having been evacuated by the Germans for "safekeeping." The US Army faced the daunting task of overseeing the return of art stolen by the Nazis. Artworks were gathered together at several collection points in Europe, which, Nicholas points out, soon had the best collections of art in the world.

Since the 1970's, those looking to return stolen art have had to deal with thorny issues such as, whether a piece was sold by force or was sold willingly to the Nazis. Recovering art that ended up in Switzerland has been difficult due to the Swiss five year statute of limitations on claims, and

Austria, until recently, had a law requiring that a percentage of art collections recovered remain in the country. There are notable recent successes to report, however, including the return of a number of pieces to the Rothschild family.

CBA Hineni—Dr. Ted Rothstein

My roots are closer to orthodoxy than any other "division" of Judaism. I grew up in Far Rockaway before it became a shtetl. I still have vivid visions of my mother lighting the Sabbath candles and saying the berachah with her hands over her eyes. We were Kosher but how I envied my Jewish friend Stevie whose mom made him bacon and eggs. I went to Hebrew school, was barmitzvah, and even learned Hebrew in High School and Brooklyn College. However, my children are "phonetic" Jews, having learned their haftorahs phonetically. But my dear friend David was orthodox and was he ever. I thanked G-d my home life was not ruled so strictly and that I did not have to suffer the drudgery and restrictions that were David's lot.. The Chabad Lubavitch were as alien to me as Martians. As I moved into my professional life I distanced myself even further from organized religion although I have always observed the High Holy holidays. My wife Frances and I are both Kohanim. However, only very recently have I learned just how infrequent the likelihood of that occurrence is. Judging from the reactions I perceive when I the fact becomes known it now seem like it is something special where before it had little if any impact on me at all. Still when Frances and I moved to a home in Cobble hill 18 years ago I studiously avoided any form of attachment to the four synagogues in Brooklyn Heights and environs. I still had no time and no interest. We joined the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue when Rabbi Rick Jacobs was at the helm and from time to time attended Friday services there for three

years, leaving soon after he did. Rabbi Joe Potasnik was a kindred spirit to me, having barmitzvahed my two sons and married Fran and me; so we joined Congregation Mt. Sinai. We could never beat a regular path to the synagogue. We still had no time and no interest. I met Rabbi Raskin and Shternie in 2004 when they sent Yankel and Eliyahu to me for their orthodontic treatment. My serious attachment to CBA began when my brother passed away in January of 2005 which led to a serious family dispute over the question of burial. I was for cremation-- his unwritten request. However, his eldest son, a profoundly religious person and Talmudic student, was pro-burial. Who had the right to decide such an issue? I called Rabbi Raskin from Hawaii at eleven o'clock at night, and he spoke with us for an hour to help resolve the conflict. When Rabbi Raskin explained that the oldest son had the most authority to make the choice I yielded without another moment's delay. When I returned I decided for the love of my brother to say Kaddish, CBA was the obvious choice for me. I am now experiencing the pleasure of meeting some wonderful people, attending the Friday service regularly (such a joy), spending Shabbos dinner at the Raskins (and with Rabbi Simcha and others), and attending some of the regular evening education classes. Rabbi Raskin has even come to my office and put tefillin on me. It was magic...open Sesame. One day we even met in the street and danced together. I love that guy; he has a sweet and gently persistent way of encouraging a person to move in his spiritual wake. Baruch Hashem for the wonderful people I have met here and the fascinating things I have learned such as: askmoses.com is useful website, Shabbos is feminine noun; it is forbidden to use toothpaste on bleeding gums, and if your pet-whatever gets out of its cage during Shabbos it is forbidden to put it back in. So now I

have found an interest and made the time. [Memorial Tribute to Jerry Rothstein: http://drted.com/Jerry_tribute.html](http://drted.com/Jerry_tribute.html)

New Construction Brings Shul Up To Code-- Moshe Golik

With an eye on the future, the executive board has authorized a gradual yet persistent upgrade of the shul building. Repairs are being made, the certificate of occupancy will be amended and the building will be brought up to code. Since the summer, fire sprinklers and fire-retardant doors have been installed from the basement to the crawlspace above the top floor....Despite the tumult of the renovations, all synagogue functions continue. Our members attend regular religious services and our Rabbis are holding weekly lectures and seminars. Our school children are again enjoying Kiddie Korner classes, although summer school was cancelled during the painting and asbestos removal....The architect supervising the construction is Avi Maor, a principal in the firm of Comprehensive Designs. His task is to bring the shul to current safety codes. Maor said, "The sprinkler system is 98% completed. We are finishing up the fireproofing of the attic and the boiler room. City inspectors have already given the o.k. on the new plumbing and the sprinklers."... Maor explained: "The synagogue needs a public assembly permit. This is definitely true for the shul sanctuary where more people congregate. The certificate of occupancy therefore had to be amended. The new C of O will put our preschool classrooms and regular functions on a solid footing."...As for the doors to the sanctuary, Maor recited a building code that "requires two exits to be remote as possible." This means at least a "25 foot separation." Asked about the new boxed-in door in the men's section, he said "the buildings department would not approve our other suggestions because the corridor is narrow there and egress would be blocked."...The reconfigured doorway is

not finished. Both Stephen Rosen, shul president, and Maor were adamant about maintaining the historic nature of the building – both inside and outside. "We will put appropriate molding consistent with this brownstone and appropriate sound-reduction devices." Rosen avowed "no expense would be spared."

MITZVAH OF BIKUR CHOLIM-VISITING THE SICK--Naomi Weinberger

As far as I'm concerned, life isn't about the big issues: the things you report as news when you see people you haven't seen for a while. Life is all that stuff that goes on between those interruptions-- the things that get overshadowed by giant projects, things that break and need to be fixed, big simchas, tragedies, and illness. But when those big things intrude on our lives, there is no escaping our responsibilities. We simply do what we must, and try to keep it all in perspective. So DO:

- Eat healthfully, exercise, get enough sleep
- Attend to your spiritual needs
- Earn a living
- Take care of your children attending to their physical, spiritual and educational needs
- Maintain a functioning home
- Be a productive member of our synagogue community And know that *sometimes* you also *have* to (Bikur Cholim is a MITZVAH after all):
- Check on someone else who is suffering: make a phone call, send a card, visit an ailing person at home or in the hospital
- Help run errands, provide food, childcare, or financial support for others who have hit a rough spell
- Make a mishabayrach (a blessing recited in synagogue during Torah reading asking for Divine healing), read Psalms

- Help make a shivah minyan
Just the other day, Thomas Zweifel said that he was under the weather and two of his friends brought him chicken soup. Eliyahu and Yankel Raskin routinely visit Michael Kahan at his home and help him put on tefillin. Simcha Weinstein, Rachel Ravitz, Eric Lebovich, Celia Weintrob, Charlotte Kaufman, Michael Bast, Avram Abramowitz, Ethan Ehrenberg, and until recently Warren Cohn, all visit Jewish patients at Long Island College Hospital. Sheila Bar-Levav, Deborah Ehrenberg, and Abigail Frost have performed countless acts of kindness when members of our shul have needed food and support. Our wonderful Rabbi and Rebbetzin on countless occasions have risen above and beyond the call to provide comfort for members of B'nai Avraham. Check your B'nai Avraham emails for mentions of funerals, shivas, hospitalizations and the like to see if there is something you should be doing to help out a friend in need. And when that person in need is you, don't hesitate to let the Rabbi and Shternie know that you are going through a rough patch. Contact me if you are interested in Bikur Cholim ("visiting the sick") at Long Island College Hospital. Let's continue to take care of our B'nai Avraham family in times of need, because sometimes, you do have to drop what you're doing and take care of things that need attention.

LETTER FROM COLLEGE--
Warren Cohn

It truly is crazy how fast eighteen years of your life goes by. One second you are starting kindergarten and the next thing you know you are off to college; to spread your wings and leave the nest. Leaving home brings forth bittersweet feelings. In some respects the freedom, new experiences, and friends are amazing; yet there is an absence: the family. Family is not just

the people who live under the same roof as you, it is a community which offers security and happiness. Most people look past the second meaning, because they are too busy with life and all that it entails. This is one of the things that I appreciate most about our little community in Brooklyn Heights, we see it all. Everyone does their thing during the week and interacts with their individual families. When Shabbos comes around the bigger family comes together. We share together in great simchas, and unfortunately terrible losses, but no matter what we are there for each other. Regardless if people stay or leave our community they always have a place and people who love them at B'nai Avraham.

New Orleans is an eclectic city, with tons of culture and wild life. It has come back so strong post-Katrina. Tulane is a great school; there are so many opportunities at my fingertips at any given time. The nickname "Jew lane" is funny, but so true. I do not think I will have trouble finding a nice Jewish girl here! I love it here, but I do miss Brooklyn Heights, and B'nai Avraham.

The Women's Wednesday Morning Class (as reported by a fly on the wall—or at least one anonymous participant)—Sarah Schmerler

It's entirely possible that some folks out there aren't burning with curiosity to know what goes on in Rabbi Raskin's weekly women's Torah study class. May we gently remind them (as the Rabbi so often points out to us in OUR class) that we women have a closer connection to G-d? We cut out the middleman, you might say. So maybe we could save you some time and unnecessary hassles. We'll give you a quick, fly-on-the-wall overview of the proceedings. In exchange for this full disclosure, at least one guy needs to come forward and tell us just how his classes go.

Deal?

- 1) 9:15 AM? More like 9:30. We rarely meet on time. Shachris ends when it ends, and all the guys have to clear out of the area. We sometimes bring our small kids to class. Needless to say, we're often late, too.
- 2) We begin with the recitation of Psalms. You know, part of the Rabbi's three-pronged approach: prayer, charity, study. We try to put some money in the pushka.
- 3) Usually we focus on the parshah of the week. (Though for a short spell last year we studied Chassidus.) We begin by reading the actual text. But things can get kind of mystical and metaphysical pretty fast. Sometimes, the rabbi will stress how the performance of a particular mitzvah pertains to women, but not always in the ways you might expect: During parshat Behallotecha, for instance, the Rabbi compared the duties of the Jewish women to the duties of the High Priest. The parshah begins with the description of how Aaron is commanded to light the menorah in the Mishkan. His is a duty performed in a place that no one else can see. So many of the mitzvot women perform in their own homes, like lighting shabbos candles, also go unseen. (Nice, huh?)
- 4) That said, there are a few wiseacres in the class (guilty, as charged). Occasionally, one of us might challenge the Rabbi to take on a conundrum like, "So, if a woman performs a mitzvah in the forest where no one can see her—and she falls—does she make a sound?" The Rabbi is remarkably patient with this sort of stuff. Usually, it reminds him

of a story. Sometimes that story reminds him of a joke.

- 5) Around this time, some guy inevitably tiptoes in—probably a straggler from Shachris, who has had the misfortune of leaving his coat or whatnot in the library. We suddenly get quiet. Shternie (who is a hoot) and Sheila give him sweet, mysterious smiles. I glare at him until he leaves.
- 6) Sometimes we have real-time, who-knows-what'll-happen, Rabbi-on-Shulchan-Aruch action. This occurred over the summer, during the 3 weeks of mourning between Shiv-Asar B'Tammuz and Tisha B'Av. The Rabbi got to a point in the analysis at hand (specifically: of why a total of 12 full line breaks occur in the Torah up until Tisha B'Av) where he started to think out loud: The relationship between the Jews and G-d was like that of bride and Groom. And a "get" or Jewish divorce is 12 lines long. Now, we all know that marriages are forbidden during the 3 weeks of mourning. But, could a man RE-marry a woman he had previously divorced? If so, could Hashem "re-marry" the Jewish people during this period? He jumped up and looked for the law amidst a sea of books. We waited. The answer came: yes, though marriages are not permitted, a man can in fact re-marry a woman from whom he was estranged. We all burst into song. Women like to talk about relationships, as they say. Was this the sort you expected?--SS

A word from the Editor

In this, the inaugural issue of B.A. Bimah, we are still experimenting; we have some of this and some of that. We need your ads, stories of your religious journey, announcements of your simcha or yahrtzeit, and any other brilliancy you concoct which might be of interest to our congregation. Criticisms are welcome, but be nice. Deadline for submissions for the Passover issue is April 3rd. – MMB

C-BAY SHALACH MONOS SALE

The Sunday school urgently needs your support. Do two mitzvot at once by buying your Purim gifts here. Nuts and Candy sectional dish = \$12; 3 or more = \$10 ea. Delivery in the US = \$18 each. Checks payable to CBAY; email Q's to EstherChakoff@yahoo.com.

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