



CONGREGATION BETH EL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

THE RABBI
SAMUEL SCOLNIC
ADULT INSTITUTE

FOUNDED IN 1977 IN MEMORY OF SAUL BENDIT

Spring 2021

"FIX A PERIOD FOR THE STUDY OF TORAH"
PIRKEI AVOT 1: 15

IMPORTANT NEW REGISTRATION INFORMATION

All courses are offered online and are recorded for those who cannot attend at the scheduled time. You may register for multiple classes that conflict in time. See Registration page.

REGISTER ONLINE! at <http://www.bethelmc.org/scolnic>
Register NOW for the Early Bird Discount.

Deadline: February 24

SIX TUESDAY MORNINGS

March 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30; April 6

SIX WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

March 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31; April 7

All classes are open to the public.

There is no prerequisite—only a desire to participate, learn, and enjoy.

THE RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC ADULT INSTITUTE, founded in 1977 in memory of Saul Bendit, is one of the leading synagogue-based adult education programs in the Washington, DC area. Now in its 44th year, the Institute has received national and international recognition. The Spring program classes will meet by Zoom only, beginning March 2 and 3. Technical support for Zoom will be available.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SCHEDULE

(MARCH 3, 10, 17, 24, AND 31; APRIL 7)

WITH MINYAN BREAK FROM 8:20-8:40 PM

7:30 - 8:20 PM

Jews and Catholics: From Buenos Aires to DC to Rome
Rabbi Emeritus Bill Rudolph and Rabbi Fabián Werbin

Why Do We Do That?
Rabbi Avis Miller

**The Rosenbergs:
The Cold War and American Jews**
Dr. Naomi Daremblum

**From Covenant to Monarchy:
Power, Authority, and Order
in the Bible**
Dr. Jerome Copulsky

**The Hebrew Alphabet and the
Evolution of Writing**
Dr. Richard Lederman

8:40 - 9:30 PM

**Innovative Jewish Thinkers:
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l**
Rabbi Greg Harris

**The Modern Tribes of Israel:
A Look at the Divides and Challenges
that Define Israel in 2021**
Amir Tibon

**Yiddish Musical Theater:
Alive and Well**
Hazzan Emeritus Abraham Lubin

**From Gulag to Google:
Selected Soviet Jewish Émigré Writers
in the 2000s**
Adjunct Rabbi Mindy Avra Portnoy

What Does the Bible Say About Love?
Gideon Amir

TUESDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

(MARCH 2, 9, 16, 23, AND 30; APRIL 6)

WITH BREAK FROM 10:50-11:10 AM

10:00 - 10:50 AM

**Yiddish Musical Theater:
Alive and Well**
Hazzan Emeritus Abraham Lubin

**From Gulag to Google:
Selected Soviet Jewish Émigré Writers
in the 2000s**
Adjunct Rabbi Mindy Avra Portnoy

What Does the Bible Say About Love?
Gideon Amir

11:10 AM - NOON

Why Do We Do That?
Rabbi Avis Miller

**The Rosenbergs:
The Cold War and American Jews**
Dr. Naomi Daremblum

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

JEWES AND CATHOLICS: FROM BUENOS AIRES TO DC TO ROME

Instructors: **Rabbi Emeritus Bill Rudolph and Rabbi Fabián Werbin,**
Wednesday evening

What is the unique bond between Jews and the Argentine Pope Francis? The class will focus on Pope Francis' relationships to the Jewish communities of Argentina and now to world Jewry. We will learn about the unique bond between the Pope and his Argentinian colleague Rabbi Skorka, about Argentinian Jewry and the state of the Church there and in DC and then about Pope Francis' tenure to date and how his actions are viewed by Catholic and Jewish leadership. Rabbi Rudolph, and Rabbi Werbin, who is from Argentina, will look at Catholic life through a Jewish lens in Buenos Aires, the Washington metropolitan area, and Rome. Guest speakers including Rabbi Skorka will shed personal light on these issues and relationships.



Pope Francis, Wikimedia Commons

WHY DO WE DO THAT?

Instructor: **Rabbi Avis Miller,** Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening



Stones on the grave of physician and Zionist Hillel Yaffe, Wikimedia Commons

Why do Jews (and the Pope) wear a *kippah*? Why do we light Shabbat candles, and examine our fingernails during *Havdalah*? Why do we slant the *mezuzah* on our doorposts, and why do we place pebbles on tombstones and cover mirrors during *shiva*? In services, why do we rise on our toes during the *Kedushah*? Why do we eat *matzah* on *Pesach* and blintzes on *Shavuot*? In this class we will explore together the history and anthropology and superstitions and magic behind familiar *mitzvot* and *minhagim* (commandments and customs).

THE ROSENBERGS: THE COLD WAR AND AMERICAN JEWS

Instructor: **Dr. Naomi Darembaum**, Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening



Julius and Ethel Rosenberg arrested, Encyclopedia Britannica

The many decades since Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's conviction for what J. Edgar Hoover called the "crime of the century" have not healed the wounds nor resolved the controversies of the case. From their indictment in August 1950, to their electrocution three years later during the height of Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist investigations, the Rosenbergs' crime, trial, and fate became a focal point of cold war passions. The case provides a fascinating prism through which we can examine America on the threshold of the postwar world.

We will also place the Rosenbergs in the milieu from which they emerged, namely second-generation New York Jews, and we will reflect on the meaning of the case in the consciousness of American Jews.

FROM COVENANT TO MONARCHY: POWER, AUTHORITY, AND ORDER IN THE BIBLE

Instructor: **Dr. Jerome Copulsky**, Wednesday evening

The ways in which we have thought and written about politics, human power, and the dispensing of justice have been deeply shaped by the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible's teachings on political order and authority are complex and sometimes contradictory, recognizing the basic human need for order as well as the dangers of centralized power and of those who wield it. Can human beings live together under a revealed law, or do they require stable and ongoing political order administered by human beings? Is monarchy the legitimate political order or a rejection of divine authority? A close and careful reading of the Biblical narrative reveals not only the fragility of human beings but also of their political institutions.



King David, Guercino, 1651 (oil on canvas). Wikimedia commons.

THE HEBREW ALPHABET AND THE EVOLUTION OF WRITING

Instructor: **Dr. Richard Lederman**, Wednesday evening



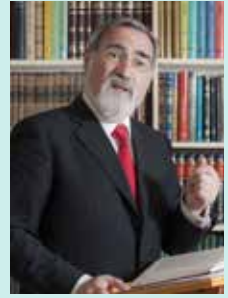
The Gezer Calendar, one of the oldest examples of paleo-Hebrew script, courtesy of the Israel Museum

Hebrew and its developing alphabet played a critical role in the development of the modern alphabet. This interactive presentation will guide us through the evolution of writing in the ancient world. We will come to understand how ancient writing advanced from pictogram to logogram to phonetic symbol, while discovering that the earliest evidence of the final step to a Western alphabet can be traced to ancient Israel. Finally, we will have an opportunity to decipher several fascinating ancient Phoenician, Aramaic, and Hebrew inscriptions from the period of the Bible. Knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet is helpful but not necessary.

INNOVATIVE JEWISH THINKERS: RABBI JONATHAN SACKS, Z”L

Instructor: **Rabbi Greg Harris**, Wednesday evening

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (1948-2020) was a leading voice teaching Jewish concepts throughout the Jewish world and interfaith circles. Communicating Judaism’s messages in clear and accessible ways, his sermons, interviews, and teachings were published in numerous books, shared in weekly emails, and broadcast on the BBC. Serving as the Chief Rabbi of the [Orthodox] United Hebrew Congregations of Great Britain and the Commonwealth from 1991 to 2013, Rabbi Sacks’ was a rare voice, crossing institutional Movements – Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and others. We will explore some of Sacks’ ideas through discussions based on his teachings. *NOTE: This class will not meet Wednesday evening, March 31. The class will meet for an extra 10 minutes (8:40-9:40 PM Wednesday evening each week, other than March 31, beginning March 3).*



Courtesy of rabbisacks.org

THE MODERN TRIBES OF ISRAEL: A LOOK AT THE DIVIDES AND CHALLENGES THAT DEFINE ISRAEL IN 2021

Instructor: **Amir Tibon**, Wednesday evening

Israel is going through a period of turmoil, with four election cycles in just two years and a growing sense of division among its diverse population. In a series of lectures about the “modern tribes” that make up Israeli society, award-winning *Haaretz* journalist Amir Tibon will describe the “challenge of division” that several of the Jewish state’s most high-ranking generals and spy masters describe as a bigger threat to Israel’s long-term security than any external enemy. The sessions will touch on issues such as: the country’s election system and why it leads to constant instability; the positive and negative trends among Israel’s Arab population; the legacy of Israel’s greatest author, Amos Oz; and also a personal reflection about life on Israel’s tense border with Gaza. Amir will share stories, anecdotes, data, and historical details that will explain Israel’s current dilemmas and also its great potential and promising opportunities.



Amos Oz picks olives with Palestinian women in the West Bank village of Aqraba on October 30, 2002, as protest against increasing violence, courtesy of Menahem Kahana, AFP.com

YIDDISH MUSICAL THEATER: ALIVE AND WELL

Instructor: **Hazzan Emeritus Abraham Lubin**, Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening



The course offers an exploration and illustration of the world of the Yiddish musical theater. This genre of music will come alive with the use of rare film footage, DVDs, and CDs. Our guest, who has appeared in New York’s National Yiddish Theater (*Folksbiene*) as well as in the Yiddish theater in Warsaw, will present a live performance. Knowledge of Yiddish is not required to benefit from or enjoy this course.

Photo from the 2019 production of *The Sorceress*, courtesy of the National Yiddish Theater

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

FROM GULAG TO GOOGLE: SELECTED SOVIET JEWISH ÉMIGRÉ WRITERS IN THE 2000S

Instructor: **Adjunct Rabbi Mindy Avra Portnoy**, Tuesday morning and
Wednesday evening



Author Lara Vapnyar, courtesy of therumpus.net

Russian Immigrant (3 novellas, 2019); Katia Raina's *Castle of Concrete* (novel, 2019), and Vapnyar's *Still Here* (novel, 2017). All books are available in paperback; however, no outside reading is required. Excerpts will be discussed in class.

The literature of émigrés from the former Soviet Union to the West has blossomed in recent years. This course will focus on writers in this category from 2003 to the present. Themes include: identity/immigration; love and death; professional and personal crises; youth and middle age from World War II to the collapse of the Soviet Union. We will look at two novels, a collection of short stories and three novellas. We will begin with Lara Vapnyar's collection of short stories (*There are Jews in my House*, 2003), and conclude with her novel (*Divide Me by Zero*, 2019). Other choices include: Maxim Shrayner's *A*

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT LOVE?

Instructor: **Gideon Amir**, Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening



Ruth in Boaz's Field, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1828 (oil on canvas). Courtesy of The National Gallery, London

The word "love" has so many meanings that it seems impossible to talk in general about it without first asking: what kind of love? That is true also for the use of the word and view of love in the Bible. In this course we will review Biblical attitudes toward different types of love: Love of parents to their children, men's love of women and women's love of men, love of a person to another person, God's love of us, and our love of God. We will review the Hebrew Bible views and if time allows will look also at the New Testament's views highlighting similarities and differences. Please have a full Bible during class – a free online library of Jewish texts

EARLY ALERT FOR FALL 2021

Fall 2021 semester dates are Tuesday/Wednesday, October 5-6
through November 9-10.

If you need technical assistance in order to participate in the Adult Institute, please call 301-652-2606, ext. 149 or send a note to: scolnicinstitute@bethelmc.org



INSTRUCTORS



GIDEON AMIR, born in Holland to Holocaust survivors, grew up in Israel. After serving in the military, he received undergraduate and graduate degrees from Hebrew University and the Weizmann Institute of Science. He has taught extensively at the college level in Israel and in the U.S. He completed a Master's Degree in Judaic Studies at Baltimore Hebrew University. Mr. Amir has been teaching Bible and a variety of Jewish subjects at area synagogues and churches, the

Osher Program at JHU, Oasis, the Melton program, and the Haberman Institute for Jewish Studies.



DR. JEROME COPULSKY is a Jefferson Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. He is a former Special Advisor at the Office of Religion and Global Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. His essays, stories, and reviews have appeared in such places as *The New York Times*, *The New Republic*, *Religion Dispatches*, *Tablet*, and *The Jewish Review of Books*. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago's Divinity School.



DR. NAOMI DAREBLUM, originally from Costa Rica, is a specialist in Latin American & European culture, art, and politics. After receiving her Ph.D., she held teaching appointments at New York University and the New School. She has taught and written on a wide range of subjects, from the rise of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela to the literature of Isabel Allende. Her pieces have been published in magazines such as *The New Republic*. She is currently teaching courses

on culture and politics at Montgomery College's Life Learning Institute.



RABBI GREG HARRIS, Senior Rabbi of Beth El, joined the Beth El community in 2002. He was ordained at JTS, where he also received a Master's Degree in Jewish Education. Rabbi Harris received his B.A. in Political Science from The American University. He is a Past President of the Washington Board of Rabbis and teaches throughout the community. Rabbi Harris is the Chair of the Pastoral Care Committee at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Life Communities and a past recipient

of the Matthew Simon Rabbinic Award given by the Jewish Federation for leadership in the broader Jewish community.



DR. RICHARD LEDERMAN spent 30 years in Jewish communal service, most recently as Director of Public Policy and Social Action and Executive Director of the Seaboard Region of The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. He holds a B.A. in Religion and a Ph.D. in Ancient Near Eastern Languages and Literature. Dr. Lederman has served as a faculty member of the Florence E. Melton Adult Mini-School and *Me'ah*, an intensive adult Jewish learning program out

of Boston's Hebrew College. Dr. Lederman has also taught courses on the Bible at the

School of Continuing Studies at Georgetown University and the Metropolitan School of Professional Studies at the Catholic University of America, in addition to courses on Bible, mythology, and the study of religion for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.



HAZZAN ABRAHAM LUBIN, the Hazzan Emeritus of Beth El, continues to be active in the wider Jewish community. He has officiated at High Holiday and other services for the past several years in Cincinnati, Annapolis, and Washington, DC. He is Secretary of the Cantors Assembly Foundation and a past president of the Cantors Assembly. Hazzan Lubin was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree by JTS. He holds a "hazzan" degree from Jews' College, London, and a Master of Music degree from DePaul University. He also pursued post-graduate studies in musicology at the University of Chicago. He lectures on Jewish music, and has performed in the U.S., Canada, Israel, Spain, Argentina, and the former Soviet Union. Hazzan Lubin served as editor of *The Journal of Synagogue Music* for ten years.



RABBI AVIS MILLER is President of the Open *Dor* Foundation, Inc., which reaches out to unaffiliated and marginally active Jews. She is also Rabbi Emerita at Adas Israel Congregation, Washington, DC, where she had the longest pulpit tenure of any woman in the Conservative movement. Past president of the regional Rabbinical Assembly (RA), she has twice chaired the national RA Committee on *Keruv/Giyyur* (Outreach and Conversion). Rabbi Miller has conducted High Holiday services at 6th and I Historic Synagogue as well as at Tifereth Israel, and she also teaches classes elsewhere in the area. In July 2010, the *Forward* named Rabbi Miller on its (only) list of the most influential women rabbis in the United States.



RABBI MINDY AVRA PORTNOY, currently serving as an Adjunct Rabbi at Beth El, was a rabbi with Temple Sinai for 27 years, and is now Rabbi Emerita. She previously was Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at American University, and an originator and former national co-coordinator of the Women's Rabbinic Network. Rabbi Portnoy, a graduate of Yale University, was ordained in June 1980 by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, where she also received an MA in Hebrew literature. She was among the pioneers for women in the rabbinate. Among her various publications are five children's books, including *Ima on the Bima: My Mommy is a Rabbi* and *Matzah Ball: A Passover Story*. She has taught at American University, the Beth El Sisterhood's *Rosh Chodesh* program, and at other local venues.



RABBI WILLIAM RUDOLPH is Rabbi Emeritus of Beth El since 2015, after 32 years of service. In his semi-retirement, additional duties include recent rabbinic leadership for the Fauquier Jewish Congregation, a creative role in the community's new Ramah Day Camp, and serving as President of the Board of the new Jewish Millennial Engagement Project. Rabbi Rudolph received the Matthew Simon Rabbinic Leadership Award from the United Jewish Communities, an honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from JTS, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington's "Campaigner of the Year" award.

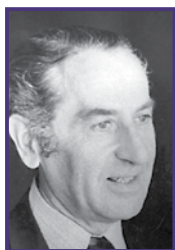


AMIR TIBON, an award-winning Israeli journalist, is the U.S. news editor for *Haaretz*, Israel's paper of record. During the years 2017-2020, he was the newspaper's correspondent in Washington, where he covered the Trump administration, Congress, and the U.S. Jewish community. His writing on Israel and the Middle East has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Tablet Magazine*, *The New Republic* and other leading U.S. publications. Amir served in Unit 8200 of the IDF Intelligence Corps and currently lives with his wife and daughter in Kibbutz Nahal Oz, the closest place in Israel to the Gaza Strip. His first book, co-authored with Grant Rumley, is a biography of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and was published in 2017. Amir was a guest speaker in Beth El's Israel Distinguished Speaker Series in 2019.



RABBI FABIÁN WERBIN joined Beth El as Associate Rabbi in the summer of 2015. Born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he completed two undergraduate degrees, in Bible and in Jewish Thought, at Haifa University in Israel and received his rabbinic ordination in 2003 from the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires. He also holds certification as elementary and high school teacher. Most recently, Rabbi Werbin served for seven years as Rabbi of Beth Israel Synagogue in Roanoke, Virginia. At Beth El, he teaches adult classes in Bible and Introductory Judaism. In February 2018 Rabbi Werbin launched "Conversations at the Mall," gathering clergy of different faiths at Montgomery Mall and setting an example of understanding, respect, and community building. They are hoping to resume their conversations when in-person get-togethers are possible.

RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC (1923-2012) z"l served as Beth El's first full time Rabbi for 32 years, and as Rabbi Emeritus until his death in 2012. He founded the Saul Bendit Adult Institute and taught in the Institute from its inception in the Fall of 1977. The Institute is now known as the Rabbi Samuel Scolnic Adult Institute. Rabbi Scolnic held advanced degrees from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He was the founder and first President of the National Association of Retired Conservative Rabbis. He taught and lectured widely at area synagogues and at the Isaac Frank Jewish Public Library and other venues. Rabbi Scolnic received the Sheva R. and Marver R. Bernstein Master Teacher Award from the Foundation for Jewish Studies.



SAUL BENDIT (1913-1976) z"l was a resident of our Washington community for 37 years and an active participant in both Jewish and non-Jewish affairs. He had a deep love for Jewish culture and was very proud of his people and his faith. We are deeply indebted to his late wife Tanya and their family for underwriting the Adult Institute for many years after its inception.

THE RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC ADULT INSTITUTE COMMITTEE
FOUNDED IN 1977 IN MEMORY OF SAUL BENDIT

Marci Kanstoroom, Chair

Paola Bolasny
Ken Feigenbaum
David Florin
Hazzan Asa Fradkin
Steven Frank
Judy Gann
Linda Goldsmith
Naomi Greenwood

Marilyn Hammerman
Rabbi Gregory Harris
Miriam Israel
Marcia Jeffries
Rita Kopin
Rhoda Nichaman
Nancy Rosenthal
Mark Schifrin

Judy Scolnic
Maury Sterns
Ginger Teitel
Jack Ventura
Stephanie Ventura
Deborah Wassertzug
Rabbi Fabián Werbin
Lew Winarsky

REGISTRATION AND OTHER INFORMATION

DATES FOR SPRING TERM: Classes will meet via Zoom on six Tuesday mornings, March 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30; and April 6; and six Wednesday evenings, March 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31; and April 7.

Information for ZOOM links: You will receive detailed information for accessing the class(es) you have registered for a couple of days prior to the first class session. There will also be a help line to call in case of technical difficulties.

REGISTRATION FORM: Please register online at: <http://www.bethelmc.org/scolnic>. Or if you prefer, you may complete and return the form on the next page with your remittance. **Online** registration is available for members and non-members.

REMITTANCE: If registering online, follow payment instructions. If registering by mail, please make check payable to BETH EL.

IMPORTANT NEW REGISTRATION INFORMATION: Since all courses are offered online and are also recorded, we are offering you the opportunity to register for any additional classes that conflict in time with the class for which you plan to register. You will be charged the same fee for the additional class(es) and you will receive the recordings of all classes each week, so you can attend one class "live" on Zoom and watch the recording of the other class(es) at a later time. Please indicate all the classes you wish to take in the registration form on the next page.

IMPORTANT: FOR EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT, PAYMENT FOR REGISTRATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 24 EITHER ONLINE OR BY MAIL.

Advance registration helps to ensure that the course you want will have sufficient enrollment.

MINIMUM REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT: Ten students.

THE EVENING MINYAN WILL START AT 8:20 PM, on Zoom (rather than 8:00) on evenings when Institute classes are scheduled.

QUESTIONS? Call 301-652-2606, Ext. 149, or send an email to scolnicinstitute@bethelmc.org.

THE RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC ADULT INSTITUTE
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COURSE FEE INFORMATION—

Early Bird registration – payment must be received by February 24, 2021:

All classes:

- Each 6-week, 50-minute course \$40/member; \$50/nonmember
(or 5-week, 60-minute course)

Regular registration – payment received on February 25 or later:

All classes:

- Each 6-week, 50-minute course \$45/member; \$55/nonmember
(or 5-week, 60-minute course)

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

REGISTER ONLINE OR COMPLETE THIS FORM — *PLEASE PRINT*

Registrant(s) home address:

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip + 4** _____ - _____

Home Phone _____

1. Registrant's name _____ **Beth El member?** _____

For class information: Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Tuesday AM courses:

Wednesday PM courses:

_____ \$ _____ \$

_____ \$ _____ \$

_____ \$ _____ \$

_____ \$ _____ \$

2. Registrant's name _____ **Beth El member?** _____

For class information: Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Tuesday AM courses:

Wednesday PM courses:

_____ \$ _____ \$

_____ \$ _____ \$

_____ \$ _____ \$

_____ \$ _____ \$

Enclosed is a check, payable to BETH EL, for a total of: \$ _____

RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC ADULT INSTITUTE

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CONGREGATION BETH EL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY
8215 OLD GEORGETOWN ROAD
BETHESDA, MD 20814-1451

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REMINDER! Classes begin Tuesday and Wednesday, MARCH 2 AND 3.

