



CONGREGATION BETH EL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

THE RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC ADULT INSTITUTE

FOUNDED IN 1977 IN MEMORY OF SAUL BENDIT

Spring 2019

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

REGISTER ONLINE!
Register NOW for the Early Bird Discount.
Deadline: February 14

SIX TUESDAY MORNINGS

February 26; March 5, 12, and 26; April 2 and 9

SIX WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

February 27; March 6, 13, and 27; April 3 and 10

No classes March 19 and 20

*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 41st year, the Institute has received national and international recognition. The Spring program, running for six weeks, comprises 11 courses offered Wednesday evenings beginning February 27, and four classes offered Tuesday mornings, beginning February 26. We are confident that you will find the courses interesting and informative.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SCHEDULE

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

7:30 - 8:20 PM

8:40 - 9:30 PM

Innovative Jewish Thinkers:

Ahad Ha'am

Rabbi Greg Harris

Rabbis in the Movies

Hazzan Asa Fradkin

Getting the Most Out of Every Drop: The Creative Genius Behind Israel's Water Management Advances

Rabbi William Rudolph and Guests

The Wizardry of (Amos) Oz z"l: His Life and Literature

Adjunct Rabbi Mindy Avra Portnoy

Dying for God: Maccabees, Masada, and Martyrdom

Rabbi Avis Miller

The State of Judaism in America: Present and Future

Adjunct Rabbi Steve Glazer

Early Bible Translations and Their Impact on our Understanding of the Text

Gideon Amir

A Serpent in the Garden: Eden in Mythological and Literary Perspective

Dr. Richard Lederman

Borges and Kabbalah

Dr. Saúl Sosnowski

Becoming (and Unbecoming) Americans: Jews and Other Minorities in America

Dr. Jerome Copulsky

The Dreyfus Case: A Preview of 20th Century Politics and Antisemitism

Dr. Naomi Daremblum

TUESDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

WITH REFRESHMENT BREAK FROM 10:50-11:10 AM

10:00 - 10:50 AM

11:10 AM - NOON

The Wizardry of (Amos) Oz z"l: His Life and Literature

Adjunct Rabbi Mindy Avra Portnoy

Dying for God: Maccabees, Masada, and Martyrdom

Rabbi Avis Miller

A Serpent in the Garden: Eden in Mythological and Literary Perspective

Dr. Richard Lederman

Early Bible Translations and Their Impact on our Understanding of the Text

Gideon Amir

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

INNOVATIVE JEWISH THINKERS: AHAD HA'AM

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

Ahad Ha'am, born Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg in Ukraine, is the father of "cultural Zionism". Before Herzl made his contributions to "political Zionism," Ha'am was struggling with the need for developing a central Jewish/Israeli ethos which would inspire modern Jews around the world. The prominent scholar, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg describes Ha'am's premise as: "The Jewish people had survived in the Diaspora... by using religious law as the binding tie of community.

Because that force was weakening in the modern era of disbelief, he said, religion no longer was preserving the Jewish people. Jews needed to find some other source of communal energy." Ha'am's concerns and words continue to be relevant today.



Wikimedia Commons

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF EVERY DROP: THE CREATIVE GENIUS BEHIND ISRAEL'S WATER MANAGEMENT ADVANCES

Instructors: **Rabbi Emeritus William Rudolph and Guests**, Wednesday evening



Brine water flows into the Mediterranean Sea after passing through a desalination plant. Photo by Nir Elias/Reuters

of brackish water, desalination, and reservoir creation. How these remedies were developed is a great story that helps us understand Israel in deeper ways.

We say that necessity is the mother of invention, and Israel is a great example. Its advances in technology have their genesis in the need to protect borders. Advances in water management spring from the same ingenuity being applied to the challenges of providing for a growing population with inadequate sources of fresh water and a semi-arid climate. This course will look at various solutions for Israel's water needs that are not only working for Israel but being copied around the world, including drip irrigation, use

DYING FOR GOD: MACCABEES, MASADA, AND MARTYRDOM

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

In this course, we will explore the history of the ways Jews have practiced *Kiddush HaShem*, Sanctification of God's Name, by behaving ethically and more dramatically by dying as martyrs. As we study traditional texts, in translation, from each era of Jewish history, we will study the development of Jewish beliefs, liturgy, law, and lore about *Kiddush HaShem*. We will begin with Biblical and post-Biblical texts, and proceed to rabbinic, medieval, and modern times, including readings about the Maccabees, Masada, the Crusades, the *Shoah*, and modern Israel, with contemporary Islamic texts on *jihād* for comparison.



Judah Maccabee by Arthur Szyk, Wikimedia Commons

EARLY BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXT

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

Studying early Biblical translations opens for us a window into the way the text was understood and interpreted in early times. In this course we shall look at the Septuagint, constituting the first translation from Hebrew to Greek and appearing in mid-3rd century BCE, and early translations into Aramaic (the spoken language of the time). The Samaritan *Torah* as well as some later translations will also be examined. The review of such varied sources, all of which likely impacted historical understanding of Biblical texts, allows us to gain back important insight into the development of the Hebrew standardized Biblical text.

NOTE: *This class will not meet Tuesday morning, February 26; classes will meet on subsequent Tuesdays from 11:10 AM to 12:10 PM. Registrants may attend another class of their choosing on February 26.*



The Samaritan Pentateuch, photo courtesy of the British Library

BORGES AND KABBALAH

Instructor: **Dr. Saúl Sosnowski**, Wednesday evening



The widely-acclaimed Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) was not a *Kabbalist*, nor did he subscribe to any belief system. His fiction, essays, and even his poetry, probed and questioned every level of reality while seeking to grasp its very roots and the role literature (and the mind) play in unravelling its possible meanings. Borges was not Jewish (he spoke of some ancestry on the Acevedo side of the family) but he devoted many pages to Jewish issues, to Israel, and to the *Kabbalah*. These are the texts we'll explore in our course.

Jorge Luis Borges, Photo by Horacio Villalobos/Corbis

THE DREYFUS CASE: A PREVIEW OF 20TH CENTURY POLITICS AND ANTISEMITISM

Instructor: **Dr. Naomi Dareblum**, Wednesday evening

The Dreyfus Affair was a turning point in French and European history when the challenges of modernity, the arrival of nationalism, and the rise of antisemitism hinted at the horrors of the coming 20th century. We will consider the historical and political context of France during the post-1871 era, emphasizing those factors which made her citizens vulnerable to an upsurge of political paranoia and religious bigotry. Against this background, we will analyze the wrongful conviction of officer Alfred Dreyfus for espionage on behalf of Germany in 1894 and how his Jewish identity came to be its central element. We will evaluate in depth the implications of this miscarriage of justice which took place with the knowledge and collusion of important members of the military and political hierarchy. Finally, we will examine how the ensuing division of French society into two rival camps became an enduring political legacy and preview of how nationalism and antisemitism thrived together, not just in France but in the whole of Europe.



Wikimedia Commons

RABBIS IN THE MOVIES

Instructor: **Hazzan Asa Fradkin**, Wednesday evening

Have you ever wondered about how Jewish clergy figures are portrayed in cinema? Be they caricature, historical, or comedic, what's behind the portrayal of the Rabbis – and Cantors – in film. We will look at films like: *Frisco Kid*, *Keeping the Faith*, *The Jazz Singer*, *A Serious Man* and others, to explore attitudes about Jewish clergy in the film industry.



Gene Wilder as Rabbi Avram Belinski in *The Frisco Kid*, photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

THE WIZARDRY OF (AMOS) OZ Z"l HIS LIFE AND LITERATURE

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



Amos Oz, Photo by Michiel Hendryckx, Wikimedia Commons

He was born in 1939 in Jerusalem as Amos Klausner but became known internationally as Amos Oz ("Oz", pronounced with a long "o", means "courage"), a writer from and about the kibbutz. His brilliant use of the Hebrew language brought him accolades, while his works were translated into more than 35 languages. He won almost every literary prize, except for the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was a proud Israeli, but not religious; a man who promoted peace and the 2-state solution, a founder of Peace Now, who engaged in dialogue with individuals of all backgrounds, ethnicities, and nationalities. In an interview in 2016, he told the British Guardian newspaper, "I love Israel, but I don't like it very much." In this course, we will examine Oz's life, with the focus among others on *A Tale of Love and Darkness* which became a movie in 2015; *In the Land of Israel* (1983); and *The Same Sea*, his own favorite book (1999); and if time permits, some excerpts from his other works, including *My Michael* (1968) and his final work, *Dear Zealots* (2017).

THE STATE OF JUDAISM IN AMERICA: PRESENT AND FUTURE

Instructor: **Adjunct Rabbi Steve Glazer**, Wednesday evening

Judaism in America currently faces multiple challenges that threaten its very continuity. In this course, we shall begin by reviewing the origins of American Judaism and its development through the 20th century. Then we shall examine the present condition of American Judaism - both its strengths and weaknesses - and conclude by exploring several possible scenarios for the future.



Photo courtesy of the Associated Press

A SERPENT IN THE GARDEN: EDEN IN MYTHOLOGICAL AND LITERARY PERSPECTIVE

Instructor: **Dr. Richard Lederman**, Tuesday morning and Wednesday evening

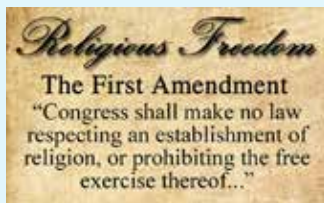
We all have come to know the message of the famous story in *Genesis 2* and *3*: the *Fall of Man*, his expulsion from an earthly paradise having been lured into sin by a female temptress and a cunning serpent. But this has not universally been the way the story has been interpreted. Indeed, there are some universal mythological and literary themes in this story: the creation of man and woman, the role of the female, earthly paradise, trees and serpents. Viewing the images of the Garden of Eden through this comparative mythological and literary lens, we may be able to discern some new and intriguing messages behind this most famous tale.



The Rebuke of Adam and Eve (1626) by Domenichino (oil on canvas), National Gallery of Art

BECOMING (AND UNBECOMING) AMERICANS: JEWS AND OTHER MINORITIES IN AMERICA

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



Although the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits the establishment of a national religion and ensures American citizens the free exercise of religion, the process by which Jews, Catholics, and other religious minorities found their place in the American civil and political order was neither swift nor uncomplicated.

American Jews faced social and political discrimination and sometimes violent antisemitism. Catholics were long suspected of being loyal to a foreign power (the Pope) bent on undermining the American democratic experiment. Mormons were feared to be establishing a theocracy in their territory. At times, all of these groups have been considered un-American and a danger to democracy and national security; over time, many have made their peace with Americanism, and have become incorporated into the nation's spiritual landscape. In doing so, these communities moved from being suspicious outsiders to insiders. By the mid-twentieth century, Americans would speak of their "Judeo-Christian" heritage; this broad concept served to unite and motivate the country in its struggles against fascism, "godless Communism," and now "radical Islamic terrorism."

EARLY ALERT FOR FALL 2019

Fall semester dates are Tuesday/Wednesday, October 29-30 through December 10-11 (no classes November 26-27).

If you need assistance or special accommodations in order to participate in the Adult Institute, please call 301-652-2606, ext. 349. A member of the Institute Committee will contact you. Designated parking spaces are available for persons with disabilities. Wheelchairs are available at the entrance to Beth El.



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 Foundation for Jewish Studies. He has taught in our Adult Institute.



DR. JEROME COPULSKY 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. Copulsky has taught in our Adult Institute.



DR. NAOMI DAREMBLUM, originally from Costa Rica, is a specialist in Latin American culture, art, and politics. After completing 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* and *Letras Libres*, one of the premier literary journals for Latin America. She is currently teaching courses on Latin American culture and politics at Montgomery College's Life Learning Institute.



HAZZAN ASA FRADKIN joined Beth El in July 2017. He was ordained by the H.L. Miller Cantorial School of JTS in May 2007, where he earned the degrees of Hazzan and Masters in Sacred Music. At the Miller School, he was class president and founder and Chair of the School's *Tzedakah* Concert Committee. He holds an undergraduate degree in Vocal Studies with a minor in Jewish Studies from Indiana University's School of Music. At IU, he became actively involved in Hillel and also graduated with a Certificate in Jewish Studies. He previously served as Hazzan at Temple Shalom in Greenwich, CT. Hazzan Fradkin has taught in our Adult Institute.



RABBI STEVEN GLAZER was a pulpit rabbi for 43 years and is currently Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Emeth, Herndon, VA, and an Adjunct Rabbi at Beth El. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and has degrees from Columbia University, JTS, and Hebrew Union College. Rabbi Glazer is on the bioethics faculties of Georgetown and The Uniformed Services University Medical Schools; and is a member of IRBs at

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

NIH and elsewhere in the local area. He is also principal at Glazer Consulting, which offers consulting services for seniors, their families, and caregivers. A member of Beth El, he has taught at The George Washington, George Mason, and Baltimore Hebrew Universities, the Smithsonian Institution, and our Adult Institute.



RABBI GREGORY HARRIS, Head 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. He has taught in our Adult Institute since joining Beth El.



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. He currently serves as adjunct professor in the School of Continuing Studies at Georgetown University, teaching "Biblical Literature and the Ancient World." He also teaches courses on Bible, mythology, and the study of religion for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and has taught in our Adult Institute.



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 Outreach and Conversion. Rabbi Miller conducts High Holiday services at 6th and I Historic Synagogue in Washington, DC, and also teaches classes elsewhere in the area as well as in our Adult Institute. In July 2010, the *Forward* named Rabbi Miller on its initial 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 25 years, and is now Rabbi Emerita. She previously was Director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at The 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*. She has taught at The American University, in our Adult Institute, in 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. He has taught in the Adult Institute since 1983. In his semi-retirement, additional duties include 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.



DR. SAÚL SOSNOWSKI, Professor of Latin American Literature and Culture at the University of Maryland, was Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (1979-2000), Director of the Latin American Studies Center (which he founded in 1989), and, from 2000 to 2011, the University's Associate Provost for International Affairs. He is the author of books and published articles (several on Borges), and editor/co-editor of over 15 volumes. He recently co-authored *Exile, Diaspora, end Return: Changing Cultural Landscapes in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay*. Dr. Sosnowski is the founder and Editor of the literary journal *Hispamérica*, now in its 48th year of continuous publication. He has taught in our Adult Institute and is a member of Beth El.

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

Jack Ventura, Chair

Ken Feigenbaum
David Florin
Hazzan Asa Fradkin
Steven Frank
Judy Gann
Hilda Getz
Linda Goldsmith
Sara Gordon
Sid Groeneman
Marilyn Hammerman
Rabbi Gregory Harris
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Rhoda Nichaman
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Nancy Rosenthal
Mark Schifrin
David Schultz
Judy Scolnic
Maury Sterns
Ginger Teitel
Stephanie Ventura
Rabbi Fabián Werbin
Lew Winarsky

REGISTRATION AND OTHER INFORMATION

DATES FOR SPRING TERM: Classes will meet at Beth El on six Tuesday mornings, February 26; March 5, 12, and 26; April 2 and 9; and six Wednesday evenings, February 27; March 6, 13, and 27; April 3 and 10. No classes March 19 and 20. All classrooms are fully accessible by elevator.

REGISTRATION FORM: Please register online at: <http://www.bethelmc.org> or complete and return the form below 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: FOR EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT, PAYMENT FOR REGISTRATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY FEBRUARY 14 EITHER ONLINE, BY MAIL, OR HAND-CARRIED TO THE BETH EL OFFICE.

Advance registration helps to ensure that:

- The course you want will have sufficient enrollment.
- Classrooms of adequate size will be assigned for your course.

PLEASE MAKE A NOTE of the courses for which you register; registration acknowledgments are not sent.

MINIMUM REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT: Ten students.

IF WEATHER IS SEVERE: Classes will not meet when Montgomery County Schools are closed because of inclement weather. Information on Rabbi Samuel Scolnic Adult Institute closing will be available on a taped message after 7 AM for Tuesday classes and after 5 PM for Wednesday classes; call 301-652-2606. As soon as the message starts, press "3" to retrieve closing information.

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

QUESTIONS? Call 301-652-2606, Ext. 349, or send an email to samuelscolnic@bethelmc.org.

THE RABBI SAMUEL SCOLNIC ADULT INSTITUTE
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COURSE FEE INFORMATION—

Early Bird registration – payment must be received by February 14, 2019:

Wednesday evening classes:

- Each 6-week, 50-minute course.....\$40/member; \$50/nonmember

Tuesday morning classes:

- Each 6-week, 50-minute course.....\$35/member; \$45/nonmember

Regular registration – payment received on February 15 or later:

Wednesday evening classes:

- Each 6-week, 50-minute course\$45/member; \$55/nonmember

Tuesday morning classes:

- Each 6-week, 50-minute course\$40/member; \$50/nonmember

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

REGISTER ONLINE OR COMPLETE THIS FORM — *PLEASE PRINT*

Registrant(s) home address:

Address _____

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

Home Phone _____

Please register me (us) for the following course(s)

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

Course(s) Tues, AM _____ \$ _____

Tues, AM _____ \$ _____

Wed, PM _____ \$ _____

Wed, PM _____ \$ _____

For urgent class information: E-mail _____

Phone: _____

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

Course(s) Tues, AM _____ \$ _____

Tues, AM _____ \$ _____

Wed, PM _____ \$ _____

Wed, PM _____ \$ _____

For urgent class information: E-mail _____

Phone: _____

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
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REMINDER! Classes begin Tuesday and Wednesday, FEBRUARY 26 AND 27.