The Life and Career of Rabbi Judea B. Miller

A Study of the 20th Century American Rabbinate

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of the requirements for ordination.

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Dedicated to the memory of

Rabbi Stanley Chyet (1931–2001)

Whose loving efforts in collecting and organizing my grandfather's files were a true מת מצוה.
Without him, this project would not have been possible.

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Abstract

This thesis is a biographical study of an American rabbi, Judea Miller (1930–1995) and will explore various aspects of his career including his upbringing on New York City's Lower East Side, his journey to rabbinical school, and his work as an army chaplain in Fort Riley, Kansas. This study continues to trace Miller's work as a congregational rabbi in Wichita, Kansas, Malden, Massachusetts, and finally, Rochester, New York. Finally, Miller's biography focuses on the various causes that came to define his rabbinate, such as Israel, Civil Rights, the Farm Workers Union, the anti-Vietnam War movement, Soviet Jewry, and his own personal struggle with substance abuse and addiction. This examination of Miller's career as a rabbi highlights many of the issues that came to dominate the Jewish world and American society in the 20th century through the lens of one of the era's most active rabbinic figures.

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Introduction

> For to be a Jew is many things. But not the least among these is to feel that to be a Jew is a moral calling.[1]

This quote, penned by Rabbi Judea Miller in connection to the State of Israel, is fittingly emblematic of Miller's rabbinic calling. For Miller, the rabbinate largely served as his entre into addressing the many social and political causes that swept through American society during the last half of the 20th century. Chapter 1 describes Miller's upbringing and familial and Judaic values that ultimately led Miller to prepare himself for the rabbinate. Miller's commitment to the prophetic Judaism stemmed from his Lower East Side upbringing in which his parents infused in him a concern for the Jewish people, the State of Israel, and the downtrodden all over the world. Miller's attention quickly turned to the concerns of the Jewish community upon learning that his two cousins escaping Nazi Germany had been killed in the Holocaust. Subsequently, he became increasingly involved in *Ha'Bonim*, a Jewish youth group committed to a socialist brand of Zionism, where he not only planned social events and rallies, but on at least one occasion helped to illegally ship weapons to the nascent Jewish state. Early in his life, Miller considered making aliyah and living on a kibbutz in Israel. These ambitions never materialized. He was hit by a taxi on his way to an Israel Independence Day rally and compelled to spend nearly a year in recovery and postpone, ultimately indefinitely, his plans to settle in the new State of Israel.

During this time, Miller became close with Anita Kaufman, a young woman also active in *Ha'Bonim*. Anita introduced Miller to a number of rabbinical students at the

[1] Judea Miller, "How normal should a Jewish state be?" *Shma, a Journal of Jewish Responsibility* 11, no. 204 (December 26, 1980): 30.

Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). These rabbinical students introduced Miller to the Reform rabbinate, and he eventually saw this calling as a way for him to advance his love for Israel and social justice causes without making aliyah. In 1952, Miller matriculated at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. That same year, Miller met Stanley Chyet, who would become Miller's closest lifelong friend. Upon ordination, both Miller and Chyet volunteered as army chaplains, leading Miller to serve an army base in Fort Riley, Kansas. As an army chaplain, Miller spent much of his time engaged in hospital visits, leading worship and holiday observances, and arranging kosher food and home hospitality for Jewish soldiers during the holidays. During this time, Miller also established contact with nearby Jewish communities, including Temple Emanu-El in Wichita, Kansas where through a series of unanticipated events, Miller would come to serve as rabbi.

Chapter 2 highlights Miller's transition from an army chaplain to a serving as an influential congregational rabbi and community leader. During this time, Miller's Zionism took on a new sense of urgency as the world slowly came to grips with the appalling cruelty of the Nazi Holocaust. Miller came to further understand the need for warfare to defend Israel's existence, but cautioned his community against romanticizing this darker side of Israel's creation. As Temple Emanu-El's rabbi, Miller visited Israel for the first time as he led a congregational trip. This trip would have a profound impact on Miller for the rest of his life.

Miller also played an important role in the budding Civil Rights Movement, in which Kansas was home to a number of significant milestones. African Americans migrated en masse from the South to the North, West, and East, in pursuit of economic opportunity in

the country's new centers of industry. Many of them settled in Kansas, which highlighted the state's policies of segregation. As the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Wichita, Miller urged his community to provide the city's blacks with access to quality housing, safer neighborhoods, and better school systems. So long as African Americans were sequestered in the inner city, Miller believed blacks would remain impoverished. To help end the cycle of poverty, Miller worked closely with Wichita's political establishment and Civil Rights leaders to pass a number of fair housing initiatives that made discriminatory real estate practices illegal. Miller's reputation as a civil rights champion made him a trusted religious figure in the community, and this status enabled him to avert a potentially violent race riot in Wichita by bringing together leaders in the black community and Wichita's law enforcement establishment to engage in dialogue and, eventually, to reach a mutual understanding.

Miller was not only active in Wichita's Civil Rights Movement, but he continued his advocacy work in the Hattiesburg, Mississippi as a part of the Delta Ministry Project. The Delta Ministry project organized dozens of clergy from across the country to fight racism, segregation, and disenfranchisement in the Mississippi Delta. Miller participated in the project at great personal risk, facing resistance as he picketed the Hattiesburg courthouse to draw attention to black suffrage and even escorting a young African American to enroll at University of Mississippi. Miller's excursions to the deep South mark perhaps the most dangerous activity of his career.

The death of Miller's father in 1964 prompted the rabbi to relocate closer to his family in the northeast. Tifereth Israel, a 450-family congregation in Malden, Massachusetts, offered Miller a position. Miller was excited, though somewhat nervous

about transitioning to Tifereth Israel. The congregation had a poor reputation for their treatment of rabbis. Additionally, the nearby city of Boston was home to some of the most prominent rabbis in the country, and the young Miller feared he would no longer be able to serve the same communal role he had in Wichita. Neither of these two fears materialized. The members of Tifereth Israel embraced Miller, eventually offering him a lifetime contract. It was during these years that Miller served as the Social Action Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis.

Chapter 3 describes how Miller's Boston rabbinate provided him with an opportunity to advance his social justice work from the communal level to the national stage. Miller continued to advocate for fair housing, though he was surprised and saddened by the strong reactionary sentiments in the northeast that successfully defeated his efforts to secure fair housing legislation in Massachusetts. These years were also marked by an unexpected deterioration in black-Jewish relations as the Civil Rights Movement became more militant and the American Jewish community began to shy away from race relations. Though Miller maintained a working relationship with black leaders throughout the country -- and he encouraged his colleagues to do the same – he began to focus more of his attention on the crushing poverty facing America's undocumented farm workers. Working with César Chávez, the leader of the movement to protect these workers, Miller led a statewide boycott of California table grapes and successfully urged the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to pass a resolution that called on all of North American Reform Jewry to join the boycott. As the nation grappled with a draft and staggering casualties in the Vietnam War, Miller emerged as one of Massachusetts' leading Jewish voices against the war. The rabbi's anti-war activity peaked in 1971, when he organized what was

intended to be a structured and well-organized anti-war rally outside the Federal Building. That particular rally did not unfold as Miller had hoped. Six rabbis and over one hundred protesters broke ranks with Miller, took over the Federal Building and were arrested by law enforcement officials. These unanticipated developments disturbed Miller greatly and provoked considerable controversy in the community.

Chapter 3 ends by focusing on Miller's move to Temple Brith Kodesh (TBK), a 1500 family congregation in Rochester, New York. While Miller enjoyed Boston's many opportunities for community involvement and social justice work, after eight years as Tifereth Israel's rabbi, he was in search of new challenges. At TBK, Miller would become the religious leader of one of the largest and most active Reform congregations in the nation.

Chapter 4 documents more than half of Miller's rabbinic career. As the senior rabbi at TBK, Miller furthered his involvement in the worldwide Jewish community. He continued his Israel advocacy work by petitioning elected officials to support Israel in times of crisis and speaking out against perceived dangers such as the sales of U.S. arms to the hostile Arab nations that encircled the Jewish state. To his chagrin, Miller's strong connection to Israel ultimately contributed to the unraveling of many significant partnerships which he had fostered in Rochester's African American community. Many Black leaders had turned decidedly against Israel, and their pronounced identification with the Palestinian cause disappointed Miller. During these same years, Miller became increasingly involved in the Soviet Jewry Movement. Since the mid-1900s, the USSR had systematically choked off religious, cultural, professional, and academic possibilities for its Jews, and by the 1980s, its anti-Semitic emigration policy prevented Jews from leaving. Out of this situation came a surge of Soviet Jews seeking to leave the USSR, known as refuseniks. These men and

women courageously petitioned the Soviet government and reached out to allies all over the world to help. Miller was one such ally, aiding the movement as whole and individual families with whom he fostered personal relationships.

Miller became involved in new aspects of United States domestic policy as well, specifically the Sanctuary Movement. At Miller's urging, TBK became the second Jewish Sanctuary congregation. The Sanctuary Movement emerged in response to the humanitarian crisis gripping Central America in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as millions of refugees fled guerilla violence and civil war, most of them seeking sanctuary in the United States. The United State's immigration policy, however, made it illegal for these refugees to establish sanctuary in the United States, which gave rise to the Sanctuary Movement, in which institutions (usually religious) would provide shelter and safe passage, brazenly defying federal law. Though Miller urged the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) to take a stand as a national body, the arrests of the Sanctuary Movement's most active leadership caused many of his rabbinical colleagues in the CCAR to eschew outspokenness.

With the resurgence of capital punishment in America, Miller took an active role in was spurred into active opposition to state sponsored executions. The CCAR was equally unenthusiastic about taking a stand on capital punishment, which had been banned in the 1960s and reinstituted in the 1970s. Miller was shocked by the discrepancy in capital punishment sentences between black and white convicts, and he soon became an outspoken critic of what he considered a racist and barbaric sentence. Though Miller was involved in a number of other domestic policy issues, the Sanctuary Movement and fighting

against capital punishment became his two primary social concerns during this period in his rabbinate.

During these same years, Miller faced his own personal demons. While in Rochester, Miller struggled with substance abuse and alcohol addiction. Following an incident in which Miller struck and nearly killed a pedestrian while driving under the influence, close friends and family staged an intervention urging Miller to enter treatment. Miller spent nearly a month at a substance abuse treatment and detoxification facility known as Chit Chat Farms in Wernersville, Pennsylvania. Upon his return, Miller struggled to find his voice as a rabbi, a Jew, and a recovering addict. He appreciated the value of Alcoholics Anonymous and similar support groups, but the pronounced Christian tenor of these support groups left him feeling alienated. In addition, the misperception that the Jewish community was largely immune to the evils of addiction added to Miller's frustration. He played a key role in raising awareness of addiction, not just among the lay members of the Jewish community, but among his colleagues in the rabbinate as well. Miller lived the last decade of his life sober, and in struggling with his addiction, he ultimately came to reconsider his role as a husband, father, and congregational rabbi. Wrestling with his addiction provided Miller with an opportunity to shift his personal priorities. For so many years, he had been consumed with a drive to bring healing to the outside world. Toward the twilight of his rabbinate, Miller began to concentrate on bringing healing to himself and to those who, like him, were recovering from addiction as well.

Preface

My grandfather, Judea Miller, passed away when I was eleven years old. I knew him only as one knows a grandfather. Prior to this project, my recollections of my grandfather were preserved in countless memories—mental snapshots of family meals, seders, vacations, and trips to Israel. Stories and legends about him and his career had been passed down from those who knew him to me. I remembered how he was always smiling and laughing when his grandchildren were around. I remembered how he loved playing soccer and taking pictures of his family during meals. I knew Grandpa Judea was a rabbi, but I had no real comprehension of his rabbinate.

In some respects, research on this project began on my first day of rabbinical school at HUC Cincinnati. As soon as I arrived, I entered the American Jewish Archives to search for my grandfather's historical papers. Upon my acceptance to rabbinical school nearly a decade after my grandfather's death, I began to learn about the rabbinical side of Judea Miller. After learning of my connection to the Reform rabbinate, rabbis and professors offered countless recollections of their work with my grandfather. Many of them told me that Judea Miller was one of the *gedolim*, one of the great rabbis of his generation. I wanted to know more about him, but more than that, I sought to learn it from him. I spent the first two weeks at HUC Cincinnati pouring through his papers, which are comprised of his letters, newspaper articles and other writings collected and organized by his dear friend and my adopted uncle, the late HUC-JIR professor Stanley F. Chyet. I wanted to learn more about this rabbi on whose shoulders I would someday stand.

Four years later, I would have the opportunity to transform my longing to discover the rabbinic side of my grandfather into a yearlong thesis project. I poured through the

countless boxes of my grandfather's writings, page by page, gathering the stories and memories that best captured the essence of his life's work. While this biography also incorporates oral histories that were taken from a number of individuals close to my grandfather, specifically my grandmother, Anita, I sought to focus this biography on his own thoughts and writings as preserved by the vast material he left behind.

Though the work that follows focuses primarily on the causes and movements that came to define Miller's career, countless conversations and interviews testify to the fact that Miller was first and foremost a dedicated congregational rabbi. Congregants, colleagues, and family members recalled the warmth and kindheartedness that characterized Miller's officiation at life cycle events, his compassionate bedside manner in making hospital visits, and the lifelong friendships he formed wherever his rabbinate led him. Those who knew Miller described his bold, sometimes even confrontational personality, and his ability to deliver a sermon so fiery "it would make the hair stand up on your head."[2] Miller's rabbinate, therefore, is much more than an exercise in familial genealogy. This thesis provides students of the American Jewish experience with a case study that illuminates our understanding of the American Reform rabbinate during the last half of the 20th century.

In light of the fact that social action and social justice causes were so pivotally important to Miller's professional interests, this thesis also sheds light on Jewish life in American during this particular period. Miller's career constitutes an exploration of some very significant political and societal struggles that dominated American life from 1960 through the end of the 20th century. From Miller's career, we may garner yet another

[2] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.

perspective on the America's Jewish community's relationship to the State of Israel, the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, Soviet Jewry, and numerous examples of cultural change. Ultimately, Miller's personal struggles with drug addiction, and his efforts to address these challenges, may provide us with some of the most valuable historical data. There are precious few documented cases of a prominent and successful congregational rabbi publicly acknowledging an addiction to alcohol—particularly a time when such an admission frequently provoked judgmental and disapproving reaction.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly on a personal basis, this biography constitutes a young rabbi's attempt to learn more about his late grandfather, who happened to have been a great rabbi in his age.

Progressivism and Jewish Identity

Judea Miller's Journey to the Congregational Rabbinate

Judea Miller's birth and early upbringing shared much in common with many Jews living in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York. Miller's father, Dave, had fled the oppressive conditions facing Eastern European Jewry in the early 1900s and was drawn to the promise and opportunities of America. Though the youngest of five siblings, Dave was the first in his family to become fluent in English and fully acculturate into American society, which enabled him to manage a dress factory and conduct business with the non-Jewish world. Yetta, Miller's mother, was a second generation American Jew who married Dave at the age of 17. The young couple had Calvin, Shirley, and Judea, as the Millers came to fully embrace American culture. It was as a child that Judea absorbed his father's passion for social justice, along with establishing a deep emotional relationship with Zionism and the budding Jewish State.

Miller became convinced of the need for a Jewish homeland following news that two of his cousins, who were his age, had been killed in the Holocaust. As Miller grew older, he became involved in *Ha'Bonim*, a Zionist youth group, whose members planned rallies and even illegally shipped weapons in support of Israel. Miller hoped to one day make *aliyah*, though this dream would end after he was hit by a taxi and broke his leg. Around this same time, Miller met Anita Kaufman, whom he would later marry, and began forming connections to rabbinical students at the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR). Miller and Anita married and Miller enrolled in JIR. With JIR's closing in 1954, the couple moved to Cincinnati to complete Miller's rabbinic education. Upon ordination, Miller served as an army chaplain at Fort Riley, Kansas for two years. Though he nearly accepted a position as

a Hillel rabbi, Miller was hired by Temple Emanu-El in Wichita, Kansas. This first chapter illustrates Miller's Jewish upbringing in the Lower East Side and his path to the rabbinate, along with Miller's first post as an army chaplain, followed by his first pulpit at Temple Emanu-El.

Miller's Roots in Eastern European Jewry

The three decades between 1881 and 1914 witnessed "one of the largest waves of immigration in all of Jewish history" from Eastern Europe to the United States.[1] Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, and the anti-Jewish sentiment and pogroms that swept Eastern Europe made life for its Jews intolerable. Over 169 Jewish communities were attacked in a wave of pogroms, tens of thousands of Jewish homes were destroyed, and untold numbers of Jews faced economic despair.[2] The notorious "May Laws" of 1882 restricted Jewish occupational opportunity, forced Jewish migration to urban centers, subjected Jews to forced military service, poverty, and starvation.[3] So intolerable was Jewish existence in Eastern Europe that in the following thirty years, over one third of Eastern Europe's Jewish population immigrated to the United States.[4]

For these immigrants, America represented not just a refuge, but a promise. This *goldene medineh*, the Golden Land, embodied the Enlightenment goals that all but evaded Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. America's progressive Constitution, its "social and religious liberty, economic opportunity, cultural advancement, and the right to maintain

[1] Jonathan Sarna, "Two Worlds of American Judaism" in his *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 151.
[2] Ibid., 152.
[3] The "May Laws" were enacted on May 15, 1882, by Tsar Alexander III of Russia. See also, Deborah Dwork, "Immigrant Jews On The Lower East Side of New York: 1880–1914" in *The American Jewish Experience,* ed. Jonathan Sarna (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1997), 120.
[4] Ibid.

Jewish identity" embodied the hope to live as free and equal citizens that many Jews shared.[5] Between the push of persecution and the pull of the *Goldene Medineh*, a sizeable portion of the world's Jewish population shifted west.

Of the two million Jewish immigrants who passed through New York's ports, between 70% and 90% remained in the city. New York City was full of economic opportunities for new immigrants, especially in the clothing trade, and with tens of thousands of Eastern Europeans already present, new immigrants felt little push to continue journeying.[6] The feelings of isolation and displacement that immigrant's travels at that time were somewhat mitigated by the social, religious, and "old world" communal ties of the closely-knit Jewish communities that these new immigrants formed, as New York City emerged as a Jewish population center in the making.[7]

Miller's Family Background

Judea Miller was the youngest child of David and Yetta Miller. David, known as Dave, was one of five brothers to emigrate from Eastern Europe. In many ways, Dave's fit the common immigrant experience; he was born in Upole, Poland, where he spent his formative years in yeshiva.[8] As professional opportunities for Jews continued to plummet, Dave became enamored with socialist ideology and frustrated by the "Old World's" failed promise of equality. Even more enticing was the promise that the Land of Opportunity held

[5] Sarna, *American Judaism,* 153.
[6] Ibid., 153.
[7] Dwork, "Immigrant Jews," 124.
[8] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.

before him. Dave was a "bright man who wanted to better himself"[9] and, like millions of his fellow *landslayt*, America beckoned.

While still in Poland, Dave shed the Jewish religious practices and spiritual convictions that were inculcated during his youth and embraced atheism. He lost both of his parents as a teenager, and in 1905, at the age of 17, Dave left Poland for the United States. He was the last of the five brothers in his family to arrive, and though he was only seventeen years old, Dave was the first and only brother to become fluent in English. His mastery of the English language and American culture masked his foreign background as he started to make a living and establish a family.[10]

While many East European Jewish immigrants who came to the US prior to 1900 were as artisans and skilled laborers, many of the Jews who immigrated after 1900 gained employment as industrial workers. Jews comprised 10.3% of total US immigration between 1900 and 1925, but they constituted nearly half of all new clothing workers.[11] Textile contracting grew out of the burgeoning needle industry that absorbed so many new immigrants to the United States. The immigrant sewing business began as a family system, in which members of the newly-settled family each assumed different aspects of making and tailoring clothes. The challenge for these family-centered clothing industries, however, was finding work. Limited English fluency made contact with the outside world a challenge, and many unassimilated Jewish families who sought to make their living by contracting had trouble scraping together an income. As a result, the family system soon evolved into a system more reliant on acculturated Jewish contractors who could communicate with

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Dwork, "Immigrant Jews," 121.

clothing designers as well as the larger clothing manufacturers. These contractors would set up factories and bid for work from these larger companies, providing a steadier stream of income than experienced by smaller, family-operated industries.[12]

Dave dedicated his life to supporting himself and his family. Having mastered the English language so completely, Dave was able to establish himself in the garment industry as a contractor and, eventually, he was able to manage his own dressmaking factory.[13] In this sector of the needle trade, companies and manufacturers would design the product, and contractors, like Dave, would bid for their business. Dave employed his own four brothers, along with many others, as the number of contracts—some from influential designers—came his way. Dave embodied the immigrant work ethic of his time. He did not attend synagogue or refrain from working on the Sabbath. He devoted himself to his business and to supporting his family.[14]

More than a decade after arriving to the United States, Dave met Yetta Waxman, a second-generation Jewish girl from the Bronx. Yetta married Dave before she graduated from high school, and they immediately began a family. Shirley, their oldest, was born within a year of their wedding in 1923. Calvin, their middle child, in 1925, and Judea, their youngest, in 1930.[15]

With Dave spending much of his time in the factory, Yetta, an energetic and dynamic mother, ran the Miller household. In 1941, Shirley married and, in 1944 Calvin joined the navy. From that point forward, Judea was raised as an only child.[16] With no siblings in his

[12] Dwork, "Immigrant Jews," 131.
[13] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[16] Ibid.

home, Judea became active in communal life outside of his home. Already at a young age, Miller developed an urge to express himself and make himself known in organizations and among his peers. As Anita, Judea's wife would later reflect, "[Judea] surely did not shine at home. I think this is why he always tried to keep himself in the public eye. I don't think he got a lot of approval at home as a kid, and so he liked that."[17] At a young age, Miller's leadership had already begun to emerge.

Miller's Early Religious Identity

Religious identity for many East European Jewish immigrants changed radically, and this was true of Judea's father, Dave. Raising himself and his family out of poverty was Dave's first and foremost priority in the New World. The United States was a land brimming with economic opportunity, but he no interest in preserving Jewish religious practice as it had been observed in the old country. Yetta's parents—Dave's in-laws, on the other hand—held fast to their Old World Orthodoxy. The Waxmans provided young Judea with a sense of traditional, "old world" Judaism. They kept a strictly kosher home, and grandfather Waxman would take his young grandson to *shul* with him on Shabbat.[18] It was through his mother's parents that Judea Miller was first exposed to Jewish life and religious practice.

While the option of becoming a bat mitzvah was never available to their oldest daughter, Shirley, the Jewish education of Dave's sons, Calvin and Judea, was only slightly better. Calvin, Judea's older brother, had a bar mitzvah at the insistence of Yetta's

[17] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 14, 2010.
[18] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.

traditional parents.[19] Calvin's religious education consisted of learning to read Hebrew in a small apartment that served as the Waxman family's living quarters, a community *beit midrash*, and a *minyan*. Judea's Jewish education followed a similar path. At the behest of his grandparents, he learned enough Hebrew to become a bar mitzvah. This one year of Hebrew study constituted the entirety of his childhood Jewish education.

Dave and Yetta raised their children to fit in fully with America's secular culture. Unlike his father, who spent his childhood in a yeshiva, Judea attended the selective Bronx School of Science, an elite secular high school.[20] Saturday mornings were spent around the family radio listening to the opera. The Metropolitan Museum of Art became a family favorite, as did the symphony and opera house. These family's cultural outings instilled within Judea a lifelong love for the opera. While not musically gifted, Judea became an opera aficionado. In his teenage years, he appeared briefly as spear-holder in the Metropolitan Opera Aida. According to family legend, Judea was so taken by the experience that he impulsively began humming along with one of the singers on stage, which promptly ended Miller's professional career as an operatic performer.

Like many of their immigrant peers, Dave and Yetta were "non-observant Orthodox Jews."[21] Socialism, liberalism, and entrepreneurialism were the pillars of their new American faith. The Jewish rites of the "Old Country" were relegated to the background. Judea's household was infused with this kind of cultural identity. Dave and Yetta raised their children with strong socialist and liberal values. They taught their children to be passionate supporters of the Democratic Party and the ideals it represented. On principle,

[19] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.
[20] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010. On the history of the Bronx High School of Science, see http://www.bxscience.edu/history.jsp.
[21] Ibid.

Dave was an avid supporter of the movement to unionize the garment industry, despite the harm the unions did to his balance sheet and his health.[22] The Millers were outspoken activists, and they were participants in organizations that sought to address social injustices. Judea's first exposure to political strife around the world was seeing his father's staunch support for the anti-Franco movement in revolutionary Spain.[23] While not yet framed in the context of progressive Jewish values, Judea's social awareness emerged during these formative years growing up in a house where there was always an injustice in the world that he and his family felt compelled to tackle.

Miller's Family and the Holocaust

Memories of the persecution and anti-Semitism they had experienced in Poland dominated the Miller family's household. Dave's oldest brother, a judge of the rabbinical court in Bialystok, was murdered in a pogrom in the early 1900s.[24] In the late 1930s, Dave was made aware of his widowed sister's two sons—young teenagers—who had remained in Poland.[25] Dave's sister had become terminally ill, and Dave and Yetta had assumed responsibility for adopting her children and raising them in America. These boys were named after Judah/Judea, Dave's father, the same man who served as the namesake for his youngest son, Judea. "I felt as though they were like [Calvin and my] alternate egos living in

[22] Early in his life, Dave's factory was caught in the crosshairs of a violent attempt to unionize the garment industry. A gang of unionized toughs were going floor to floor and roughhousing garment factory employees they thought had resisted unionization. While Dave's was a union factory, the union gang got off the elevator on the wrong floor, and thinking that they were in a non-unionized factory (cont.) when they were in fact in Dave's, began their attack. In the altercation, Dave was hit so hard that he lost his right eye. While his support for the garment unions remained strong, Dave's had to wear a glass eye for the rest of his life.
[23] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.
[24] Letter from Judea Miller to Adam Urbanski, January 25, 1982, MS 686, Box 6, File 8, AJA.
[25] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.

Poland,"[26] Miller would later say. Dave did what he could to bring the boys over. On the eve of the Holocaust, Dave sent over large sums of money and worked tirelessly to obtain entry visas for his nephews.[27]

Judea was especially excited for these boys to join their family. With his older brother preparing for the Navy and Shirley having married and out of the house, he wrote about how excited he was for his "two new brothers who were now coming to live with [him] in America."[28] Judea even described how he and Calvin had made room for them in their bedroom.[29] Miller's cousins, however, never made it onto the ship. Miller wrote, "The boys were scheduled to leave the port of Danzig on September 5, 1939. The Nazis invaded on September 1st. The boys disappeared, swallowed up by the Holocaust…"[30]

While Miller had never met young cousins, this experience shook him deeply. Reflecting back on this dark time many years later, Miller wrote,

> Ever since September, 1939, I have been tormented by the thought of these two Jewish children,--my cousins, my brothers. They were like me and my brother, of similar ages and with identical names. Why were we spared and they were not? It certainly wasn't because I or my brother were more worthy to survive. We were alive merely by an accident: my father came to America and his sister remained in Poland.[31]

Miller wrestled with this survivor's guilt and the burning questions of injustice and worldwide Jewish welfare associated with it for the rest of his life. The experience of losing his "cousins/brothers" helped to set into motion the rabbi that Judea Miller was to become. As Miller himself wrote, "[My cousins' deaths were] capricious, and I felt I had to make

[26] Response at ADL Testimonial, Judea Miller, May 9, 1994, Box 6, File 24, AJA, pp. 3–6.
[27] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.
[28] Response at ADL Testimonial, Judea Miller, May 9, 1994, Box 6, File 24, AJA, pp. 3–6.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

some sense of it. In effect, I had to try to justify my own survival."[32] Miller's sense of guilt, combined with the strong liberal and social ethic he absorbed as a child, fueled his unyielding support and love of the Jewish people, coupled with his empathy for and support of the downtrodden all over the world.[33] These two traits would become emblematic components of Judea Miller's rabbinate. In an address before the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), as the recipient of the ADL's "1994 Americanism Award Tribute" honor, Miller reflected back on this time in his life: "Wherever people are threatened with oppression and injustice; wherever the monsters of genocide and hatred and bigotry raise their ugly, snarling heads—I will ever try to be there with the victim. This has become a principle of my own life as rabbi and Jew."[34] Emerging from a profound sense of loss, the young Miller dedicated his life to the pursuit of justice all over the world, and especially to the welfare of *klal Yisrael*.

Miller's Early Zionism

It was in Zionism that Miller first felt Judaism's pull. As a child, Miller's older brother Calvin had been involved in *Ha'Bonim*, a moderately left-wing Zionist youth organization.[35] Calvin joined as a young teenager, and shortly after Miller became a bar mitzvah, he followed in his brother's footsteps. *Ha'Bonim* and the notion of Zionism it promulgated served as Miller's first and most enduring exposure to a meaningful sense of Jewish identity. He was enamored with the idea of Jewish statehood from his youth. Miller became

[32] Ibid.
[33] On survivor's guilt, see *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in the Jewish Diaspora.* ed. Judith Gerson and Diane Wolf (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). See also*, The Posttraumatic Self: Restoring Meaning and Wholeness to Personality*, ed. John Wilson (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[34] Response at ADL Testimonial, Judea Miller, May 9, 1994, Box 6, File 24, AJA, pp. 3–6.
[35] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.

much more involved in *Ha'Bonim* than his brother had been. He led groups of teenagers as they stood on street corners with Israeli flags, advocating the virtues of Jewish statehood to all those who passed by. He would raise money for the unborn state by speaking to women's groups and social gatherings across the city.[36] Zionism, Miller's Jewish identity, was not a private encounter. For Miller, it was a public issue that demanded the attention of the world.

In the weeks and months leading up to the founding of the State of Israel, Miller played a hands on and eyewitness role to its creation. Sometimes this even meant breaking the law. In the dead of night, Miller and a small number of other boys from *Ha'Bonim* would go to the shipping docks and load guns and other weaponry into ships headed for what was then Palestine.[37] As a former member of *Ha'Bonim* would later comment, "Judea had a flare for finding exciting, semi-legal things to do. He liked excitement."[38] Miller was present at the United Nations meeting in Freshmeadow, Long Island, when the United Nations declared Israel a state.[39] These thrilling and emotional Jewish encounters, combined with the tragic loss of his young cousins in the Holocaust, moved Miller to dedicate his life to the Jewish people in the only way he knew. He was going to make *aliyah*.[40]

Anita and an Alternative to Aliyah

Aliyah was not *Ha'Bonim's* only focus. The group went to plays about Israel and put on productions of their own. They would read translations of Israeli books together. The

[36] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

group had a strong social component to it as well. As Calvin would later reflect, "[*Ha'Bonim*] was a really fun time. It was a great place to meet girls."[41] When he was sixteen years old, Judea met Anita Kaufman, a young high school student new to *Ha'Bonim*. As Anita would later reflect, "He was very compelling. When he was in a room, you knew he was there. He was very smart and very handsome, and even when he was sixteen, people flocked to him."[42] While they spent their first year socializing through the larger *Ha'Bonim* youth group, Miller's relationship with Anita would shape their lives in ways that, as children, they would have never imagined.

At the time, however, Miller was considering *aliyah.* Soon after the establishment of the Jewish state, Miller made arrangements to finish high school and work on a kibbutz as a plumber the following summer. Circumstances, however, would prevent him from ever realizing this dream. Miller had visions of returning to the United States after this summer to begin the process of making *aliyah*, and in the meantime, he began his first year of college at the New York University.[43] Miller remained deeply involved in *Ha'Bonim* through his freshman year as an undergraduate. On May 14th, 1949, *Ha'Bonim* helped to plan a rally and celebration to mark the first anniversary of the establishment of Israel. To the annoyance of his group, Miller never showed up to the event he helped to plan. He had been hit by taxi and suffered a severe compound fracture to his leg, an injury from which he would never fully recover.[44] This injury drastically altered Miller's life and the plans of making *aliyah* he had ahead as his commitment to *aliyah* subsided while in recovery.[45]

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[41] Phone interview with Calvin Miller, October 16, 2010.
[42] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

Though Miller's dream of *aliyah* had come to an end, his concern for the downtrodden and his commitment to the Jewish people, values he absorbed as a child, never abated. It was around this time that Anita met Harold Miller.

The months after his freshman year of college, Judea and his family spent the summer at a beach house on Rockaway, Long Island. Anita, meanwhile, worked as a counselor at a Jewish summer camp in the Bronx. Also a counselor at the camp was Harold Miller, a student at the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR), class of 1952. Anita and Harold started casually dating, and Harold introduced Anita to his JIR classmates. The rabbinical students welcomed Anita into their group, with Harold even taking Anita to her senior prom.[46] When Miller returned from Rockaway, Anita introduced him to the JIR students she had met that summer. Miller had begun studying pre-law at NYU, and though his dreams of *aliyah* had passed, Anita reflected his ongoing commitment to social justice. These JIR students introduced Miller to the rabbinate as an avenue to pursue his passion for the Jewish people, the Jewish state, and the welfare of the world at large. Harold eventually dropped out of rabbinical school to pursue a career in dentistry, but the impact that he and his JIR friends inspired Miller to consider this new path.

Rabbinical School

Miller became enamored with the Jewish Institute of Religion, in which he saw his values manifested in a Jewish institution for the first time. JIR served as the institutional reflection of the life and values of Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise (1847–1949). First and foremost, Wise was a passionate Zionist. Michael A. Meyer, a contemporary scholar of

[46] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.

Reform Judaism, describes the charismatic Wise as "one of Reform Judaism's most aggressive rebels… [Whose] self-confidence, combined with the gifts of an impressive appearance, a magnetic personality, thunderous, eloquent speech, and a remarkable intelligence" served as the *raison d'être* for the Jewish Institute of Religion.[47] Wise was an "early and militant Zionist" and a "part of that small but influential band of Reform rabbis who had joined Zionist ranks long before the majority of their colleagues."[48] Wise was also an ardent supporter of social justice, "especially taking the side of workers against their exploitative employers."[49] Wise and his rabbinical school reflected back to Miller many of the goals and values he held dear. Wise's style of rabbinate came to inspire Miller's for the rest of his life.

Harold Miller and the group of friends Judea became close with at JIR represented a fundamentally different approach to Judaism than Miller had ever known. From his youth, Miller had always sought to dedicate himself toward the welfare of the Jewish people. For Miller, however, Judaism had been a culture rather than a religious commitment. Zionism and the burgeoning Israeli culture were Miller's Jewish outlets. Until Anita met Harold Miller, neither she nor Miller had ever encountered a Reform Jew. It was around the time when Miller and Anita started dating more seriously that they began attending services at Temple Emanuel on New York City's 5th Avenue. The summer after Miller's junior year in college, Miller began his application to the Jewish Institute of Religion. That Thanksgiving,

[47] Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: a History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 302.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

he and Anita became engaged.[50] Miller spent the summer after college rigorously preparing for JIR's Hebrew examination, upon which his acceptance to the Institute depended.

Miller's Hebrew, limited to what he could remember from his cursory bar mitzvah training, was insufficient to begin his rabbinical studies in New York. Had he not passed, Miller's only option for Reform rabbinical school would have been to move to Cincinnati, learn Hebrew there, and complete his rabbinic education in the Midwest. As Anita reflected, she and Miller were New Yorkers to the core and had no intention of moving.[51] Highly motivated to pass this exam, Miller worked daily with a member of the JIR faculty and passed the Hebrew examination just weeks before the start of JIR classes that fall. Soon to be married and beginning rabbinical school, Miller's adulthood started to take shape.

Miller and Anita were married the first Thanksgiving of rabbinical school in 1952. Anita dropped out of college for an office job to help fund Miller's education, and with Miller teaching religious school on the weekends, the young couple was able to support Miller's rabbinical training while remaining in New York City surrounded by the friends and family they had known all of their lives.[52] Around the same time the young couple became pregnant with their first child, JIR announced that it would have to close its doors. Rabbi Wise, the JIR's primary fundraiser, was facing declining health and became increasingly involved in fundraising for the United Palestine Appeal, the World Jewish Congress, and assisting Jewish communities in Nazi Germany.[53] Unable to carry the Institute alone, the JIR became a part of the "rival" Hebrew Union College, and for a short time, its students were transferred to Cincinnati. All students wishing to continue their

[50] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[53] Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* 303.

studies would have to do so at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Weeks after Anita gave birth to Jonathan, the young Miller family and their New York JIR classmates, the "Manhattan transfers,"[54] moved to Cincinnati.

As Miller and the "Manhattan transfers" adjusted to life in the Midwest, many became less enamored with the idea of rabbinical school after being forced to move. As Anita would later reflect, the move caused Miller to view his rabbinical course work as something he had to endure. As his wife would emphatically remind him, "Judea, the only thing you have to get out rabbinical school is yourself!"[55] There were bright spots, however, in Miller's years of rabbinical training. He enjoyed his student pulpits in Indiana and Illinois, and taught religious school at Wise Temple.[56] It was also in rabbinical school when, over a shared lunch on the first day of school, Miller met classmate Stanley Chyet. Miller and Chyet "fell in love with each other right away," and their close friendship endured for the rest of Miller's life.[57]

Miller's Chaplaincy at Ft. Riley, Kansas

Miller had entered rabbinical school hoping to serve as a congregational rabbi, but as Anita would later emphasize, he had no mentor or advisor to help him find his first congregational position.[58] In 1957, with the United States engaged in the Korean War, the Jewish Welfare Board established a policy with the military to enlist a certain number of

[54] Phone interview with Gary Zola, October 22, 2010. Zola states that he heard the expression from Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk.
[55] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

rabbis from each ordination class to serve as chaplains for two years.[59] Patriotic and without any other appealing options, both Miller and Chyet volunteered to fill the HUC chaplaincy quota.[60]

The limited records on Miller's years in Ft. Riley suggest that his time as a chaplain was busy, but ultimately unfulfilling. Miller spent the summer of 1957 in his chaplaincy training program, while Anita, who was then pregnant with their second child Rebecca, moved to New York for those months to live with her parents.[61] The military then sent the Miller family to serve the army base at Fort Riley, Kansas, for his two year assignment, during which time Miller received the rank of 1st Lieutenant.[62] His primary responsibility was serving patients in the Ft. Riley Army Hospital. Miller was also responsible for informing families about the passing of their loved ones, conducting Shabbat and holiday services, arranging for kosher food, defending Jewish soldiers facing anti-Semitism and disciplinary action, and coordinating adoptions for the larger Ft. Riley community.[63]

While Miller cherished the role he played in arranging adoptions for the Ft. Riley community,[64] his communication with the civilian world was otherwise limited. Miller worked with the Kansas Jewish community to arrange kosher food and home hospitality during the Jewish holidays, and as Miller became more established in the Kansas Jewish community, the Jewish Welfare Board encouraged him to become more involved. While he spoke on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal a number of times for the Jewish community of Wichita, Kansas, Miller rebuffed further calls from the Jewish Welfare Board to expand his

[59] Email correspondence with Barry Baron, February 8, 2011.
[60] Though one interviewee suggested he was selected through an HUC lottery system.
[61] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[62] Letter from Judea Miller to Jerry Paley, November 4, 1958, Box 5, File 1, AJA.
[63] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[64] Ibid.

outreach efforts to the larger community. In a letter to Joseph Paley of the Jewish Welfare Board Area Office in Denver, Colorado, Miller wrote, "I do not have the time at present to waste as a missionary to the civilians. We receive our basic requirements from them and I am grateful. The additional projects will just have to wait for another Chaplain who has the rapport with the civilians that I [Miller] apparently lack."[65] As time would tell, however, it was Miller's outreach to the civilian community of Wichita that would launch his career as a congregational rabbi.

Entering the Congregational Rabbinate

Miller began eagerly looking for a congregational position as his two-year contract with the army came to an end. Miller could hardly wait to leave Ft. Riley. In a letter to Private First Class Harold Blau, Miller described Ft. Riley as "not the worst spot in the Army, but… certainly not the most interesting."[66] As Miller sought to leave the routines of army life for the more varied life of the congregational rabbinate, he received assurances from Temple Emanu-El, a relatively small congregation in Wichita, that they were interested in hiring him as their rabbi.[67] Miller's hiring process was complicated by the CCAR's policy which required rabbis elected to serve in a congregation the size of Wichita's to have at least three years of rabbinical experience before becoming that congregation's Senior Rabbi. Miller, however, had only been out of school for two years. With Miller's army

[65] Letter from Judea Miller to Jerry Paley, November 4, 1958, Box 5, File 1, AJA.
[66] Letter from Judea Miller to Harold Blau, October 20, 1958, Box 5, File 1, AJA.
[67] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.

contract about to expire, and having not received an offer from Wichita, Miller started looking for congregations in other parts of the country.[68]

Though the Civil Rights movement was in its infancy in 1959, Miller was eager to address the profound injustices faced by African Americans in the South. In addition to Wichita, Miller applied to serve congregations in Nashville, Tennessee and Tuscaloosa, Alabama.[69] A closer examination into Miller's interview with Temple Emanu-El in Tuscaloosa sheds light on why he was not invited to serve in these two Southern pulpits.

Aubrey Buchalter served as the president of Temple Emanu-El at the time that Miller applied for that congregation's rabbinical position. As he reflected on the time in which Miller applied for the position, Buchalter described the anger, fear, even mob violence that silenced both the black and Jewish communities. For example, Buchalter told of an attempt to integrate the city's movie theater, when "one night… an African American was going to a picture show to see a film and an angry crowd showed up in the hundreds surrounding the theatre to keep that person from going to the theatre."[70] Instances like these terrified the Jewish community, and most of southern Jewry preferred to speak with "quiet voices," fearing that outspokenness would jeopardize their livelihoods and imperil their physical well-being. They learned quickly that silence was the surest path to peaceful coexistence. "The mood at the time," according to Buchalter, "was, 'don't rock the boat.'"[71]

The Tuscaloosa Jewish community, according to Buchalter, was between 50–60 families, largely comprised of local merchants and small family businesses. In describing

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Phone interview with Aubry Buchalter, October 21, 2010.
[71] Ibid. See also, Mark K. Bauman and Berkeley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880's to 1990's* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

the small community, Buchalter noted the composition of the Tuscaloosa Jewish community and the fear they all had, writing, "We were all these little merchants who had no control over anything… We were terrified to have a rabbi who was too liberal. These Jews had businesses whose economic welfare would be threatened if they had a rabbi who led them into controversy…"[72] Miller, even in this early stage of his career, was a controversial figure. Buchalter would later remember Miller as "a liberal man as it related to segregation and desegregation."[73] Miller was not only incompatible with the congregation's values- he would have been a threat to the community's welfare and even safety.

With only a month remaining on his contract with the army, two rejections from Southern congregations, and no word from Wichita, Miller expanded his search for rabbinical positions beyond the South and beyond congregational positions. Anita described this time in their lives as one when a family "couldn't go a day without work," pushing Miller to get a job wherever he could.[74] With a wife and two young children to support, Miller began looking for Hillel positions all over the country. He interviewed for the rabbinical position at Case Western Reserve University's Hillel in Cleveland, Ohio. The university was enthusiastic about Miller's candidacy and offered him the job.

The Millers, however, never made it to Cleveland. Miller received a call from the university offering him the job, and he and his family were slated to fly to Case Western to sign the contract and find an apartment. On their way out the door, Rebecca, the Miller's youngest, got sick, and the family had to go back inside to clean her up. "The whole ordeal

[72] Phone interview with Aubry Buchalter, October 21, 2010.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.

to clean up Rebecca took about twenty minutes," Anita said, "and come minute number nineteen, as we were about to head out the door to sign the papers for Cleveland and find a house, the phone rang, and it was Wichita saying they wanted [Miller] to be their rabbi." [75] Eager to serve as a congregational rabbi, Miller accepted the offer immediately, cancelled his flight to Cleveland, and began wrapping up his army service.

Conclusion

Miller's family and upbringing was typical of the Jewish immigrant experience in the Lower East Side. His parents became acculturated American Jews, relinquishing their Eastern European Jewish identities for the opportunities of the *goldene medina*. The Eastern European world eventually caught up with the Millers, however, as the family learned of the deaths of two of Miller's cousins who were killed while fleeing Nazi Germany. From an early age, Miller was a deeply committed Zionist and became active in *Ha'Bonim*, a Zionist youth group. It was through *Ha'Bonim* that Miller met his wife, Anita, who introduced Miller to students of the Jewish Institute of Religion. Enamored by JIR, Miller let go of his dreams of making *aliyah* and began his rabbinical studies in 1952. Following rabbinical school, Miller assumed the post of army chaplain at Fort Riley, Kansas, where he and his family lived for two years. Miller was then elected as rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Wichita, Kansas, as the young rabbi began his congregational rabbinate. During these years at Temple Emanu-El, Miller would become a successful pulpit rabbi, visit Israel for the first time, engage Wichita's closed-door politics as a community leader, and become a passionate supporter for the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement.

[75] Ibid.

Jewish People and Jewish Values

Temple Emanu-El, Wichita, Kansas

Miller's early career as a congregational rabbi in Wichita, Kansas was a marked transition from his more limited role as an army chaplain to addressing the broader issues facing the Jewish people and other marginalized communities throughout the country. During these years, Miller visited the state of Israel for the first time and explored the violence that pockmarked the state's origins along with the hope for a modern country living peacefully alongside its neighbors. Miller's concern for Israel and the unfolding future of the Jewish people, once deeply personal interests, became congregational prerogatives under Miller's Wichita rabbinate.

United States history was also unfolding during Miller's years in Wichita, as Kansas emerged as one of the battlegrounds for the budding Civil Rights Movement. Beginning with the Reconstruction, a steady flow of blacks migrated from the South to the West and North in search of economic opportunity brought about by industrialization. Though the 13th Amendment banned slavery, Supreme Court decisions such as Plessey v. Ferguson provided legal precedent for a racially divided society. It was in Kansas 100 years later, however, where legislation such as Brown v. Board of Education and Civil Rights activists such as Chester Lewis would help pave the way to a more egalitarian and integrated nation.

Miller's involvement with the Civil Rights Movement focused primarily on the issue of fair housing in Wichita and the Delta Ministry Project in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Miller saw how African Americans faced legal and social barriers from moving into safe middle-class neighborhoods with good schools, which the rabbi believed only exacerbated the generational cycle of poverty. To help blacks in his community overcome such obstacles,

Miller helped to initiate the Community Committee for Social Action and cultivated relationships with political leaders in the Wichita community. Miller would later leverage these relationships to take on Wichita's powerful Real Estate Board, which led to the passing of Wichita's first fair housing legislation, the Steven's Ordinance. Miller's passion for the Civil Rights Movement ultimately led him south, and in 1962 and 1963, he participated in the Delta Ministry Project. This African American advocacy organization provided financial, vocational, and legal assistance to the destitute black community in the Mississippi Delta, though its volunteers, like Miller, participated at great personal risk.

By the mid-1960s, Miller began to look beyond Wichita. The death of his father had Miller realize how distant he had become from his northeastern family, and in 1963, he began to look for a position outside the Midwest. In the fall of 1964, Miller accepted the position as rabbi of Tifereth Israel in Malden, Massachusetts and in the coming months, parted ways with his Wichita community.

Early Rabbinic Involvement with Israel

As reports from the Nazi genocide reached Jews all over the world, Miller was shaken, not just by the staggering death toll, but by what he perceived as Jews failing to defend themselves against those who intended them harm. Jewish passivity was a common denominator Miller understood to be at the root of much suffering throughout history. As Miller wrote, "The fault of our people through the centuries was its reluctance to bear arms against its enemies. It is no wonder that millions of Jews were systematically decimated in the past World War. [This] was the paramount cause of the destruction of six million."[1]

[1] Letter from Joseph Hausman to David Hirsch, November 24, 1963, MS 686, Box 1, File 1, AJA.

Though Jews throughout history were usually forbidden to bear arms, Miller believed that Jewish victims of persecution were in small part responsible for their own destruction by failing to defend themselves.

The 20th century highlighted for Miller the fragile state of the Jewish people and the need for a strong modern State of Israel. The State of Israel embodied Miller's greatest hope for Jewish continuity because it fostered a new sense of Jewish identity, refocusing the Jewish people's drive for self-determination, strength, and independence. The *chalutzim*, the Jewish pioneers of the land of Israel, represented for Miller a different kind of Jew, "a force to be reckoned with, not utilized and disposed of, as in Nazi Germany's death campaigns."[2] The 1948 War of Independence highlighted the fundamental role Jewish strength would serve toward ensuring Israel's survival. As Miller wrote to Stanley Chyet in 1962, "We Jews have no ally but the Ribono Shel Olam. We can look to no help except for the fist at the end of our OWN right arm… Israel was alone in 1948–49, and I fear that she will be very much alone in, God forbid, any future conflict."[3] Though Miller would condemn much of the violence that precipitated Israel's founding, he was not an ideological pacifist. Israel represented Miller's ideal of a just and peaceful modern state, the key to Jewish survival which must be defended.

The Deed (1963), a work of fiction by bestselling author Gerold Frank (1907–1998), provided what many considered a glorified account of the assassination of Lord Monye, who served as the British Minister of State in Cairo, Egypt, from 1942 until his assassination in 1944 by *Lehi* (the Stern Gang), a militant anti-British group. Miller's strong

[2] Letter from Abraham Stavsky to David Hirsch, November 24, 1963, MS 686, Box 1, File 1, AJA.
[3] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, May 18, 1962, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.

reaction to *The Deed*, preserved in a review of the book, demonstrates Miller's understanding of Zionism and his relationship to the Jewish state.

For Miller, Frank's book highlighted an aberrant strand of Jewish resistance that lay far outside the mainstream Zionist enterprise which was ultimately responsible for establishing the state. "Terrorist groups," such as *Lehi* and the *Irgun*, wrote Miller, "were a wild bunch of assassins who were a constant source of embarrassment to the *Yishuv*."[4] Miller depicted these small, loosely organized groups as trained to kill, but without any program "for the promotion of Jewish life and for the growth of the Jewish community," Miller's *raison d'être* for the Jewish state.[5] Miller pointed out how the heroes of Frank's book victimized Jews, Arabs, and the British as they pursued a policy of destruction and revenge. Such an agenda, according to Miller, would have never produced a viable State of Israel. As Miller wrote,

> …their program was one of terror and murder.. Modern Israel would never have been given life by such irresponsible terror and promiscuous bloodshed. [But] time blurs memory… In spirit and devotion they were heroic. One cannot but admire their dedication to Jewish freedom. But their means were abhorrent and ugly and destructive to the very cause they championed… We tend to forget what it actually was that gave life to Israel. It certainly was not the terrorist's bomb or the assassin's bullet. Rather it was the determination to build and plant and create despite all odds….[6]

[4] Judea Miller, "Review of *The Deed*, by Gerold Frank," p. 1, undated, MS 686, Box 7, File 1, AJA.
[5] Ibid., 2.
[6] Ibid.

For Miller, Zionism's true value was in the establishment of a just and peaceful society infused with modern liberal values. Miller was proud of Israel's progressive welfare legislation, which he deemed "consistent with our Torah teachings."[7] Israel embodied the promise of a just and righteous Jewish society; a light unto the nations. Glorified accounts of violence, such as Frank's rendition of Lord Monye's assassination, failed to express what Miller saw to be Zionism's greatest potential.

Though Miller was a Zionist from his youth, his passion for the movement took on new meaning after his first visit to the modern State of Israel. Miller first visited the country in 1961 as part of a congregational trip, and he was captivated by the vibrancy of the young state. In correspondence that was written shortly after he returned from his first visit, Miller observed that his impressions of Israel were unlike anything he had expected: "There is present here a vitality and vigor that is impossible to describe; everywhere there is growth and anticipation, -- taking place before your very eyes."[8] Miller defined this time as one of the most profound periods of Jewish history, one where "the past and the future of our people merge as one… "[9] He later described his congregation's visit to the top of Massada, where, in the excavated Zealot's synagogue, Miller's group conducted a worship service. As Miller later described the event, "It was probably the first Reform Jewish worship service ever held on Mount Masada. I never remember ever feeling more religiously touched by a worship service in my life."[10] In the turmoil that dominated much of the 20th century, Zionism captured Miller's hope for Judaism's future and the betterment

[7] Letter from Judea Miller to the editor of the *Jewish Advocate*, undated, MS 686, Box 3, File 12, AJA.
[8] Letter from Judea Miller to "Friend," August 11th, 1961, MS 686, Box 3, File 9, AJA.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

of humanity. Miller later contrasted the turmoil that had ravaged the 20th century with the promise of Zionism:

> It is good that somewhere on God's earth, where so much blood and treasure is being expended on destruction, -- there is at least one place where life is being renewed… our people are now home again in our ancient land. There are many problems. But these will be overcome.[11]

Civil Rights: Separate, though far from Equal

Miller's passion for the worldwide Jewish community, specifically the State of Israel, was to become a central component of his rabbinate. The other mainstay of Miller's career was his devotion to the downtrodden, both in the United States and abroad. The decades preceding Miller's years in Wichita provided Miller tremendous opportunity to broaden his rabbinate, especially as the nation was grappling with increasingly pressing questions of race and equal opportunity.

Though the 13th Amendment formally abolished slavery, in 1865, it did little to unhinge the prevailing attitude in white society that the races were different and meant to be kept apart. The 1896 case of Plessey v. Ferguson reflected these popular sentiments in a landmark decision supporting the infamous "separate but equal" clause. In 1892, Homer Plessey, who was one-eighth black, boarded a white-only train car in Louisiana. In defiance of a new Louisiana law mandating separate street cars for whites and blacks, Plessey remained in the white train car. The case was taken to the Supreme Court, which ruled that states had the right to provide "separate but equal" facilities to its white and black citizens.

[11] Ibid., 2.

With slavery outlawed as a means to subject African Americans to second-class citizenry by the 13th amendment, those resisting racial equality used Plessey v. Ferguson as the legal framework to continue their efforts.[12] The "separate but equal" clause, combined with a number of Supreme Court rulings supporting racial disenfranchisement and degradation,[13] hedged the 13th Amendment such that it would not be fully realized for over a century.

As the Reconstruction's promise of equality faded in the 1870s, waves of African Americans, known as "Exodusters," left the South for the West and North. [14] This trend first emerged as blacks, fearing the rise in violence against them in the South, fled for their lives. Migration continued, however, as industrialization presented these former sharecroppers with economic independence and opportunity. This flow of blacks away from the South would swell with the "Great Migration" of over a half million African Americans from 1916-1919, as urban men left their factory jobs to fight in World War I.[15] Millions more left the South, as mostly white cities saw their black populations growing exponentially. Prior to 1950, for example, only one large city in the United States outside of the South had an African American population close to 20%. By 1960, however, African Americans made up a fifth of the community in seven of America's twelve largest cities and even a majority of the residents in Washington D.C.[16] Though the dark ages of slavery were long past behind them, for most African Americans, the dream of equality and equal opportunity was still at arm's length.

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[12] Nell Painter. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 142.
[13] Mills v. Green (1885), Williams v. Mississippi (1898), and Giles v. Harris (1903)
[14] Painter, *Creating Black Americans*, 140.
[15] Ibid., 174.
[16] Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 55.

Kansas has long played an important role in the nation's ongoing struggle for black equality in America's post-Civil War history. "It was to Kansas that twenty-six thousand African Americans journeyed between 1870 and 1880 to build their lives in freedom as homesteaders and escape the brutality of the South's white supremacist reconquest of political power."[17] A family in Topeka, Kansas sued the city's segregated school system, resulting in the landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court case. Three years later, the Kansas-born President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957 into law as the first civil rights act in 82 years. The following year at the Dockum Drug Store, Wichita witnessed the nation's first successful sit-in, an act of civil disobedience that would sweep the South two years later. Wichita lawyer and Civil Rights activist Chester Lewis would come to have a profound impact on the leadership of the NAACP, while Arthur Fletcher, another Kansan, structured the nation's Affirmative Action Plan. The Civil Rights activity taking place in Kansas was not only a microcosm of what was taking place around the country, but in many respects, at the cutting edge.[18]

In contrast with America's founding documents, which espouse freedom and equality for all, the prevailing sentiment in white society leading up to the Civil Rights Movement was that this was not true. During this time, "scientific studies" based on biology, sociology, and economics sought to demonstrate how blacks were an intrinsically inferior race and should be treated as such.[19] Many would buttress these "findings" with, as historian Paul Harvey writes, "… a properly religious cloak thrown over Jim Crow's

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[17] Gretchen C. Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: the Civil Rights Movement in the Midwest, 1954–1972* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), ix.
[18] Ibid., x.
[19] Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6.

skeleton."[20] These attitudes were not limited to the South, but found throughout the country.

Wichita, Kansas, was no exception. Eleanor Long, a member of a Wichita community church, expressed her views toward the surge of black immigrants in correspondence with Miller over the problem of the growing unskilled black population in Wichita. She lamented how "…the black African has never produced, never created, never written history, never found a great religion."[21] Doubting the ability for African Americans to contribute to American society she asked, "Why are there so few negro capitalists, owners of businesses, builders of their own motels and hotels…?"[22] For Ms. Long and countless others in the Wichita community, the increasingly visible and forever downtrodden black community embodied a racial inferiority that accounted for centuries of squalor and poverty. According to Ms. Long, costly efforts to integrate them into the majority white society would yield little for a race genetically incapable of staying above poverty.

It is unclear exactly what drew Miller to support the Civil Rights Movement, though he would often draw parallels between the persecutions of Jews throughout history to the oppressed of the 20th century. Disturbed by American racism, Miller countered sentiments expressed by Long and others, writing,

> [I]t is certainly unnecessary for me to demonstrate that the Negro is human too and entitled to dignity and respect. I know too many brilliant and talented Negroes and too many stupid white people to believe in the nonsense about racial superiority and inferiority. That the majority of

[20] Ibid., 229.
[21] Letter from Eleanor Long to Judea Miller, April 7, 1964, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[22] Ibid.

> Negroes in America do have problems I admit. But first we have crippled them and then we blame them for limping.[23]

Miller asserted that the problems facing the African American community resulted from white society rather than black inability. Miller's impassioned reply to Ms. Long is representative of countless letters, sermons, and talks rebutting an increasingly public and acceptable form of racism. Miller rebutted claims that African Americans had yet to lay claim to any significant cultural accomplishment, noting how, by southern guidelines, the immensely accomplished Egyptian and Moor societies were in fact black. The country's African Americans had suffered centuries of victimhood, and responsibility for their cycle of poverty, in Miller's eyes, rested squarely on white society's shoulders.[24]

Fair Housing and the American Dream

Now residing largely in cities across the North and West, many blacks still lacked basic educational opportunities, access to quality housing, and other resources enjoyed by America's middle class. For Miller, this meant ameliorating their situation by helping them move to safe neighborhoods, enroll their children in good schools, and earn a steady income, opportunities wholly lacking in the impoverished black ghettos. All of these objectives, however, required integration into white society, a dream forever undercut by the nation's "separate but equal" legal system. For many whites, the influx of unskilled African American migrants to their cities sparked a renewed sense of self-preservation. The desire of blacks to integrate into white society sparked a tremendous backlash of racism and close-mindedness, and local governments struggled to find ways to keep the doors to

[23] Ibid.
[24] Letter from Judea Miller to Eleanor Long, April 12, 1964, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.

their neighborhoods and schools forever closed to their community's non-white residents. Race, manifested largely in the subtle form of zoning discrimination, became a national discussion.[25]

One of the most common ways eastern, northern, and western cities resisted the influx of African Americans was by establishing legal and extralegal policies to isolate and segregate blacks, keeping their middle class aspirations out of reach. Real estate contracts would often include "restrictive covenants," which penalized the new owner of a home if he or she sold it to African Americans and often Jews.[26] The adoption of racially motivated zoning laws and housing policies was a familiar technique used to separate, and therefore subjugate the black population. Supreme Court decisions such as the 1948 case Shelly v. Kraemer and the 1953 case Barrows v. Jackson sought to end discriminatory housing and zoning policies, though with limited success. Despite these cases, a number of federal housing policies remained in place that stymied any significant progress. Until 1950, for example, the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (VA), for example, only helped to finance homes in neighborhoods composed of people of the same race as the loan applicant. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), a federal agency that helped to finance mortgages in urban areas that were in danger of default, instituted a ratings system that raised interest rates for residents in inner city neighborhoods. While the spirit of the law stood against such discriminatory practices, Wichita, Kansas, like many

[25] John Finley Scott and Louis Heyman Scott, "They Are Not So Much Anti-Negro as Pro-Middle Class," in *Prejudice and Race Relations*, ed. Raymond Mack (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 57.
[26] Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, 74.

other cities throughout the country, witnessed a white flight to the suburbs, leaving blacks in the underfunded inner city with nowhere to go.[27]

Out of this backdrop emerged the Wichita Community Committee for Social Action (CCSA) in 1962, which called on local citizens to form a diverse committee to advocate for an enforceable fair housing policy for the city of Wichita. Miller served on the CCSA's first leadership team.[28] That same year, Wichita was granted the distinction of being an "All American City," which shocked the CCSA and others who observed the city's discrimination firsthand.[29] Pointing out the discrepancy between Wichita's honorable designation and its discriminatory zoning laws, Miller helped to author a statement of conscience, written on behalf of the CCSA, which read,

> We wish to make a declaration of our belief in the principles of equality vital to American life. We believe that Wichita, the All-American City, should have open occupancy in housing. In signing this statement, each of us declares that no qualifications about race, color, religion, or national origin ought to be applied, nor so far as we are concerned will be applied to prospective residents in our neighborhood.[30]

The statement was signed by over 1,600 Wichita residents, including a number of community leaders before being submitted to the Wichita City Commissioners. This petition marked the first of many attempts by Miller and the CCSA to develop an enforceable fair housing policy for Wichita.[31]

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[27] Ibid., 74–75.
[28] Ibid., 76.
[29] Ibid., 74–75
[30] Ibid., 76.
[31] Ibid.

Initiatives such as the CCSA's statement of conscience and similar initiatives to follow, however, would have yielded little result without the approval of Wichita's political establishment. City leaders, who often dismissed traditional labels such as "Democrat" or "Republican," prided themselves on being "above politics" and leading the city in a civilized manner. This was only made possible, however, by the fact that nearly all political discussions and decisions were made behind closed doors. Meetings which concerned public welfare, such as those held by the City Commission and Board of Education, were not open to the public. Public officials, especially Wichita's five City Commissioners, were responsible for much of the city's decision-making with little room for public input.[32] To make an impact, a relationship with a City Commissioner was essential.

In his efforts to address issues of zoning and housing, Miller reached out, not only to members of his own congregation, but to elected representatives with the power to rectify the situation. In a letter to Wichita City Commissioner Gerald Byrd,[33] Miller described the forced "ghetto" conditions facing African Americans in Wichita as "contrary to our religious and American principles of justice and equality for all citizens of all races and creeds."[34] The black community, Miller continued, is not the only victim of white racism. Miller continued, "…segregated neighborhoods are also destructive to the moral well-being of the majority races, for segregation is hurtful to the segregator as well as to the segregated. Arrogance, complacency, blindness to human need, -- these hurt the mind and the heart

[32] Ibid., 73.
[33] Gerald Byrd (1917–1993), served as Wichita City Commissioner from 1961–1965.
[34] Letter from Judea Miller to Gerald F. Byrd, October 18, 1963, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.

and the soul of the white race too."[35] White society, Miller urged the Commissioner, had much to gain from a fully integrated society.

Carl Bell, Wichita City Commissioner from 1961–1962 and Mayor from 1962–1963, was an unlikely political advocate for Wichita's fair housing legislation. Bell's grandfather, for example, had authored Oklahoma's discriminatory school law separating the black and white school systems. Bell's father forever warned him that getting involved in Wichita's racial issues would spell the end of Bell's career. Despite this unlikely background, Bell became close with Miller and a number of other Civil Rights advocates in Wichita who caused him to reconsider his political priorities.[36]

Miller's support for the Civil Rights Movement, particularly as it concerned integration and fair housing policy in Wichita, went beyond petition-writing campaigns and developing strategic partnerships with political leaders. In his six years as the rabbi of Wichita's Temple Emanu-El, Miller held a number of high-profile offices and initiatives to help rectify this social ill. With Bell's support, Miller used his position as pulpit rabbi and active community member to open up Wichita's closed-door politics by helping to establish the Human Relations Commission, which he later chaired from 1964–1965.[37] The Fair Housing Commission was a Wichita citizens council dedicated to eradicating the visible and invisible barriers preventing the city's African Americans from lifting themselves out of poverty. The Human Relations Commission played a crucial role in reversing the city's overt and discreet discriminatory policies by planning public awareness campaigns,

[35] Ibid.
[36] Eick, *Dissent in Wichita*, 74.
[37] Letter from Judea Miller to Mayor Vincent Bogart, September 10, 1964, MS 686, Box 2, File 12, AJA.

marches, and challenging and ultimately overcoming Wichita's discriminatory Real Estate Board.

Though Miller and the Human Relations Commission, in conjunction with Carl Bell, former mayor of Wichita, challenged the powerful Real Estate Board, they were unable to enact an enforceable fair housing policy in Wichita during Miller's years at Temple Emanu-El. In early 1964, the Human Relations Commission researched the twelve states and fifty-five cities that had already enacted fair housing initiatives in order to draft a proposal for Wichita. Though the specific suggestions made by Miller's Human Relations Commission are unclear, the Real Estate Board opposed every measure to integrate Wichita's neighborhoods.[38] The issue was then elevated to the City Commission, which held a number of hearings on fair housing on February 5th. Less than a week later, however, Miller's proposed ordinance failed. Reacting to the City Commission's newfound concern with the issue, the Real Estate Board pledged to voluntarily end their discriminatory practices and extend their services, and real estate opportunities, to Wichita's African Americans. The Human Relations Commission proposed ordinance failed, sparking a city-wide picketing and letter-writing campaign by the ordinance's supporters.[39]

Though these efforts were successful in persuading the City Commission to reconsider a fair housing ordinance, the first and only ordinance passed during Miller's years in Wichita lacked the enforcement necessary to impact Wichita's racially divided society. Proposed by John Stevens, "one of Wichita's most conservative millionaires," what became known as the Stevens Ordinance 27-003 passed unanimously, prescribing that any realtor caught engaging in discriminatory housing practices would have their name written

[38] Eick, *Dissent in Wichita,* 81.
[39] Ibid.

up in the City Commission's weekly minutes. In spirit, proponents of fair housing considered this a victory, though in application, they saw this "toothless ordinance" as doing little to shift Wichita's dire situation.[40]

Wichita's Human Relations Commission was highly skeptical of Steven's Ordinance 27–003, leading Miller and a team of other fair housing advocates to test the ordinance's strength. Miller sought to "demonstrate beyond a doubt that discrimination [did] exist in the sale, rental, and financing of housing in Wichita," which led to the founding of the Documentation Committee.[41] The Documentation Committee evaluated the sincerity and efficacy of the Steven's Ordinance.[42] As one of the founders of the Documentation Committee, Miller helped to train fair housing advocates, both white and black, as potential "buyers" in the Wichita housing market to evaluate how black families seeking quality middle class housing remained at a disadvantage.[43] Letters were then sent out to real estate agents in the black community requesting that they document any and all instances of housing discrimination. After months of testing, the results were clear. Unscrupulous real estate agents, unjust zoning laws, and discriminatory landlords actively prevented blacks from living in the middle class neighborhoods that could help them emerge from the cycle of poverty.

For proponents of the Fair Housing Initiative, equal access to good middle class schools and neighborhoods became the enduring hope for a just and equitable future for all races and the gauge of successful integration.[44] In a letter to Stanley Chyet, Miller discussed

[40] Ibid., 82.
[41] Letter from Judea Miller to Frank Williams, April 9, 1964, MS 686, Box 2, File 12, AJA.
[42] Letter from Judea Miller to Everett S. Reynolds, March 30, 1964, MS 686, Box 2, File 12, AJA.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Finley and Scott, *Prejudice and Race Relations*, 58.

the mixed successes of the Fair Housing Initiative. Though Wichita failed to pass fair housing legislation for nearly seven years after the 1964 Stevens Ordinance, public opinion, especially in the black community, had begun to sway. Miller described how blacks were now thinking about moving into better homes, a notion that had become "thinkable and acceptable" for whites, and was now a legally-viable option for blacks.[45] For Miller, fair housing represented the ending to one of America's darkest chapters, as the black population of Wichita could finally begin to break the cycle of poverty.

A Crisis Averted

As African Americans came to understand the weakness of Wichita's 1964 fair housing legislation, race relations deteriorated even further. Around the same time that Miller was petitioning the local government more ethical legislation, he also served an essential role in smoothing out relations between the black and white communities in a time of crisis. Not fitting in fully in white or black society, Jewish communities all over the country were in the unique position of being both "inside" and "outside" of the white establishment,[46] and Miller's ability to move between the black and Jewish community proved to be a useful skill. One interesting episode will serve as a case study.

Arriving home from vacation in the summer of 1964, Miller observed a complete unraveling of Wichita race relations. African American youths were rioting on street corners and hurling stones at passing cars. Police who tried to intervene had been beaten. One City Commissioner told Miller privately that he now always carried a gun for

[45] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, December 21, 1964, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[46] Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 28.

protection. "It was a nasty situation," Miller wrote.[47] Bell, then serving as City Commissioner, called Miller on the day of his return to warn him about an imminent police crackdown, aided by the state guard, on African Americans "rioting" in their communities. Additionally, Bell said, unless something was done about these violent youths, he would not risk introducing the new Fair Housing Ordinance to the City Commission. City authorities had issued warnings against whites going near the black communities where the riots were taking place. Though dangerous, on the night of Bell's phone call, however, Miller got into his car and drove to the center of the "ghetto" to see what was at the heart of the matter.[48]

Later, Miller wrote about how he got out of his car, strolled the neighborhood in the thick of where the riots were taking place, and spoke with many of the residents there, some of whom he knew.[49] In speaking with residents (something that the all-white City Commission and police force had failed to do), Miller learned that the "riots" were, in fact, "a teenage recreation problem."[50] Outside of a weekly "Colored Night" at one of the roller skating rinks, Miller discovered that there were no recreational establishments in Wichita where black teenagers could go after dark. They congregated on the street, not to riot, but because there was nowhere else for them to go. "Quick police action," Miller asserted, "might have set off a real mess."[51]

Miller called for an emergency meeting, using the temple as a neutral meeting ground, and invited those individuals he knew from the black community's leadership as well as heads of the Wichita police force to discuss the issue face-to-face in an effort to

[47] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 14, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

avoid violent confrontation. Though Miller did not document the proceedings of the meeting, he facilitated a conversation in which black community leaders and police could voice their concerns and work toward a common solution. This was enough to divert the violent crackdown that moderates on both sides of the issue were hoping to avoid.[52] Many years later, Miller's wife commented on the rabbi's decision to place himself in the midst of such a volatile situation, saying, "We are in no place to psychoanalyze [Miller], but he was very, very daring. With his family killed in the Holocaust… sometimes I think he had a death wish."[53] As reflected in Miller's account to Chyet, however, his decision spared Wichita from what could have become a bloody confrontation.

Jews and Blacks: and a Tenuous Alliance

As bleak as race relations were in Wichita, Miller's writings suggest that a deep sense of moral calling pulled him south, where the situation was dire. Similar to Miller's role in the prevention of race riots in Wichita, the southern Jewish community operated in the uncomfortable grey area between white and black society. To the black community in the South, Jews were increasingly associated with white culture, though something of "breed apart."[54] To the white community in the South, Jews were loosely associated with the powerful majority, though religiously and culturally very distinct. As a "breed apart" from gentile culture, southern Jews proved more ideological allies than civil rights

[52] Ibid.
[53] Phone interview with Anita Miller, July 10, 2010.
[54] Webb, *Fight Against Fear,* 28.

activists.[55] Webb cites a poll conducted amongst white Christian southerners in 1959, which concluded:

> Southern Jews were considerably more supportive of civil rights initiatives than were white Gentiles. So successfully, however, had Jews concealed their true convictions that only 15 percent of Gentiles believed them to be in favor of integration; 67 percent confessed not to know how Jews felt.[56]

The southern Jewish community saw it very much in their interest to keep their views on race and integration, if they diverted from the status quo, quiet. The southern Jewish community's silence, ambivalence, and sometimes even support of segregation proved more practical than ideological. In 1913, for example, Leo Frank, a Jewish factory owner in Marietta, Georgia was accused of the rape and murder of thirteen year old Mary Phagan. Though the case against Frank was flimsy and the chief witness against Frank convicted for perjury during the case, Frank was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was later kidnapped from his cell and lynched by an angry mob. This incident, and the widespread anti-Semitism that followed, roiled southern Jewry, forcing the community to reconsider their precarious role in white Christian society.[57] As Clive Webb, scholar of race relations in the American South notes, "Jews understood above all that the continued goodwill of the Gentiles could only be guaranteed through their uncritical acceptance of the southern caste system."[58] Southern Jewish communities lived in a precarious limbo with their white neighbors, and strove not to challenge the status quo. These vulnerable, often

[55] Ibid., 44.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Bauman and Kalin, *The Quiet Voices*, 2.
[58] Ibid., 44.

small Jewish enclaves understood their economic welfare and even physical well-being to be at the mercy of the white society of which they would always be degrees removed.

Rabbis of these southern communities were equally ambivalent about their role and the role of the Jewish community in advancing any pro-integration sentiments. While many southern rabbis sympathized with the movement, few were willing to publically state their pro-integration views. Webb described the prevailing attitude of the time: "Should rabbis immerse themselves in the civil rights struggle, it would enable segregationists to intensify their accusations of a Jewish conspiracy against the South."[59] As a result, most Orthodox and Conservative rabbis "prioritized the preservation of the faith and traditions of their own people" over concerns for those outside of their Jewish communities. [60] The few southern Reform rabbis who did speak out against segregation were compelled by the movement's core mission to "combat social injustice."[61] These southern rabbis often paid dearly for their commitment to what they understood to be their prophetic tradition.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi, was home to a Jewish community which had dismissed two rabbis over the course of two years due to their public stances on race. Many members of Congregation B'nei Israel, Hattiesburg's Jewish congregation, were deeply apprehensive about those who would publicly challenge the prevailing system of segregation. The community was actually fearful of their white neighbors. Aubrey Buchalter, the president of Temple Emanu-El of Tuscaloosa, grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He recalled how local youth would vandalize store fronts with swastikas every Halloween.[62] The Jewish community of Hattiesburg understood that their economic livelihoods as well as their

[59] Ibid., 169.
[60] Ibid., 170.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Phone interview with Aubry Buchalter, October 21, 2010.

physical well-being were directly dependent on their public support of segregation. As such, the leadership of Congregation B'nei Israel was determined to restrict its rabbis' words and actions in regard to the anti-segregation movement. In the space of two years, B'nei Israel had forced out Rabbi Charles Mantinband as well as his successor, Rabbi David Ben-Ami, for their involvement combating segregation and the ill-will it garnered toward the Jewish community.[63]

Outside activists were considered to be equally dangerous to southern Jewish communities. A large number of Jews from the North traveled to the South in order to advance the Civil Rights Movement. Many local southerners considered these efforts as outside interference. Change was coming to the South, though in terms of a Jewish communal perspective, the impetus for change was not primarily a locally-based movement.

Animosity towards Civil Rights workers who came to southern communities from elsewhere was widespread throughout the South. Many southern Jewish communities shared these sentiments, and efforts to assist African Americans by Jewish "outsiders" often met with local Jewish resentment. Historian Clive Webb comments on these visitors: "Within the local Jewish community there was little support for the demonstrations… [The pro-integration Jewish outsiders] threatened to associate all Jews with racial agitation, a prospect which panicked members" of southern Jewish communities.[64] In short, visiting civil rights advocates from the North were viewed as interlopers by most southerners and meddling relatives by many local Jews. Roy Wilkins, then serving as executive secretary of the NAACP, sympathetically commented on this phenomenon: "Some [Jews] have joined

[63] Bauman and Kalin. *Quiet Voices*, 213–229.
[64] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 199.

the Negro's opposition for safety's sake – and perhaps understandably so. What can a lone Jew, or a dozen Jews, do in a small Southern town against overwhelming white supremacy sentiment?"[65] Others in the African American community were not as forgiving as Wilkins. Historian Abraham Duker, writing in 1965, noted that many Jews were further alienated by Jewish critics in the black community. Duker claimed that "[Jewish] fears and doubts [were] not eased by what appear[ed] to be the increasing tendency on the part of Negro spokesmen not to give recognition to pro-Negro activities by Jews…"[66] Black communities in the South were increasingly hostile to the Jewish community, whom they viewed as cowardly accomplices to the genteel culture of segregation.[67]

The black community's relationship to Southern Jews became immensely complicated. While ambivalent toward Southern Jews, the black community held a sense of admiration for what the American Jew, also a cultural outsider, had been able to achieve in American society. Many blacks saw Jews as an erstwhile oppressed minority that had successfully overcome a plight similar to their own: "Both [Jews and blacks] had suffered a lowly status on first arriving to America, but only Jews had succeeded in shaking off the shackles of destitution and discrimination."[68] Miller too saw blacks and Jews sharing facing similar barriers to admission in American society. In response to a proponent of segregation in Wichita, Miller wrote, "If you have studied Jewish history as you claim, you no doubt are aware that there have been ignorant and bigoted people who have written about the Jew just as you have written about the Negro."[69] Blacks and Jews in America both

[65] Ibid., 25.
[66] Abraham G. Duker, "On Negro-Jewish Relations – A Contribution to a Discussion," in *Negro-Jewish Relations*, ed. Salo W. Baron, Abraham G. Duker, and Meir Ben Horin (New York: Citadel Press, 1965), 21.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 31.
[69] Letter from Judea Miller to Eleanor Long, April 12, 1964, MS 686. Box 1, File 24, AJA.

arrived to America as cultural outsiders, and in the eyes of many African Americans, the achievement of the Jewish community having integrated into American society was one they hoped to emulate.

The reluctance of many southern Jews to publicly oppose segregation together with Jewish integrationists from the North took many in the Black community by surprise. Blacks working for Civil Rights expected Jews to rise as their natural allies in the struggle against a common enemy, and were oftentimes disappointed. The Jewish community of Montgomery, Alabama, for instance, refused to support, or even be marginally associated with, Dr. Martin Luther King Junior's 1956 bus boycott, in which Montgomery's nascent Civil Rights Movement boycotted the city's public transportation system.[70] Aaron Henry, the president of the NAACP in Clarksdale, Mississippi, was surprised and angered by what he considered a betrayal of an assumed natural alliance:

> In the fight for human dignity, we have never underestimated our opposition, but we have overestimated our support. We thought that naturally we would have the Jews on our side, because the enemies of the Jews were usually found in the same group that opposes us. But we don't have the Jews supporting us.[71]

Henry did not have the entire Jewish community in mind, however, when he penned these words, as Jewish activists from all over the country journeyed to the South, often at great personal risk, to address what they considered one of the era's most pressing issues.

[70] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 23.
[71] Ibid., 25.

The Delta Ministry Project

The Delta Ministry, also known as the Delta Ministry Project, was founded by the National Council of Churches in September, 1964 to provide food and financial assistance, address illiteracy, jumpstart voter and even college registration, and spur economic development for the large contingent of African Americans in the rural Mississippi Delta, Hattiesburg, and McComb region. It also attempted to stem the flow of black immigration to the ghettos of the North and West in a near futile search for better employment.[72] Mississippi had the highest concentration of blacks in the country, and the state's repressive Jim Crow laws contrasted sharply with the new federal civil rights legislation of the late 1950s and early 1960s. At the Delta Ministry Project's height in the mid-1960s, it had fifty-five staff and volunteers, including Rabbi Miller.[73] Miller made two trips to the region; the first in 1963 and the second in 1964.

Civil Rights activists who came to the South during this period did so at great personal risk. As Miller's wife, Anita, would later reflect, Miller's adamant insistence to make a second trip to the region marked a turning point for his family. By Miller's second trip, the situation in the South had deteriorated greatly. Three Civil Rights workers had been murdered by the Ku Klux Klan only months before Miller left, and countless others had been harassed, jailed, and beaten.[74] So dangerous had the situation become that Miller instructed Anita, "If I don't call you every night by 10:00, call the FBI."[75] Anita later reflected, "It was like he went over my dead body… Here I had a nine year old and a six year

[72] Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: the Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), x.
[73] Ibid., ix–xiii.
[74] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[75] Ibid.

old. I didn't work, and I had no career and we didn't have any money. If something had happened to [Miller], what would have happened to us?"[76] It is unclear why Miller was committed to such a dangerous excursion, though Anita would guess that, like Miller's involvement in Wichita's volatile race conflict, the deaths of his family members in the Holocaust spurred him to fight against injustice despite the personal costs involved. Though decades later he would regret his decision and the risks it placed on his family, [77] Miller was determined to address this burning injustice despite the risk it placed upon himself and his family.

Miller took a highly visible role in the Minister's Project in Hattiesburg, increasingly placing himself on the front lines in the struggle for Civil Rights. During his first trip to Hattiesburg in 1963, Miller met Reverend John Cameron, a local Hattiesburg minister and head of the Hattiesburg Ministry Project,[78] and participated in what Miller described as "possibly the first integrated meal in modern Mississippi history." Referencing the 1960 Greensboro, North Carolina sit-in, Miller writes,

> I had been involved in what was possibly the first lunch counter sit-in in Mississippi. It was a Woolworth lunch counter in Hattiesburg, Mississippi in January, 1963. A local Black minister, the Rev. John Cameron, and I went together to the lunch counter. When we sat down together, the entire store was immediately emptied. We two sitting at the lunch counter were the only customers left in the entire store. There was only one waitress. She was a

[76] Ibid.
[77] Response at ADL Testamonial, Judea Miller, May 9, 1994, MS 686, Box 6, File 24, AJA.
[78] Donald Williams, "Oral History Transcripts - Reverend John E. Cameron Sr." Civil Rights Documentation Project, http://www.usm.edu/crdp/html/transcripts/cameron_revered-john-e-sr.shtml (accessed February 22, 2011).

young dark woman. Her complexion resembled that of a Latino. She came to us and smiled and said, 'I'm really one of you, but they don't know it…[79]

During that trip, Miller also helped to distribute aid to poor African American families and fostered relationships with leaders in Hattiesburg's black community. It was during Miller's subsequent trip, however, when he would assume a position of leadership in the project.

The following year, Miller was active in what became known as "Freedom Day," a voter registration initiative in Hattiesburg. "Freedom Day" was one of the most visible voter registration drives in the South since Reconstruction, resulting in what was known as the "Perpetual Picket," in which Northern clergymen picketed the Hattiesburg courthouse for months to draw attention to black suffrage. Miller also became involved in combating racism in public universities. With the help of a Presbyterian minister, Miller escorted twenty two year old John Frazier, a young African American, to the University of Southern Mississippi, whose admissions policy discriminated against black enrollment. As a Wichita newspaper article titled, "Wichitans See Negro Halted," reported:

> Two Wichita men Monday accompanied a 22-year-old Negro as he tried to enroll at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. The Rev. Garth G. Barber, a Presbyterian minister, and Rabbi Judea B. Miller accompanied John Frazier to the student services building where he was denied enrollment. They were escorted by campus police.[80]

[79] Letter from Judea Miller to the editor of *Democrat and Chronicle*, February 5, 1990, MS 686, Box 2, File 9, AJA.
[80] "Wichitans See Negro Halted," (March 10, 1964), MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.

Racism in Mississippi, however, manifested itself far beyond the college campus. Miller was sickened by the violence used against the indigent black community. During his second visit, Miller described how a young African American was arrested by the Hattiesburg police "on suspicion of being an accessory to theft," which the youth denied. The police were brutal, and the city of Hattiesburg was silent. Miller described his advocacy work for the boy and the perversion of justice he saw throughout the South:

> The police have beaten him unmercilessly [*sic*]. His jaw is broken in several places and he is now unable to speak. The police have carried him back to jail, where he was beaten. The boy can't even walk. He hasn't yet been arraigned (after two weeks!). We can't get a local attorney to speak to us, let alone to accept the case… I will be glad to leave this damn hell.[81]

Though Miller never returned to Hattiesburg after his second trip, he continued to influence the national Civil Rights debate in his activities as a community leader and Civil Rights advocate.

Selma as a Turning Point of the Civil Rights Movement

The situation in the South was to get worse before it got better. Miller was enraged by the 1965 murder of Jonathan Daniels, a Boston seminary student, and the near-death of Richard Morrisroe, a Catholic priest. The two were arrested in a voter registration drive in Fort Deposit, Alabama, and moments after their release and the release of Ruby Sales, a young SNCC volunteer, they were confronted by deputy sheriff Tom Coleman. Coleman fired a shotgun at the men at close range, killing Daniels immediately and severely

[81] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, May 18, 1962, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.

wounding Morrisroe. Two months later, Coleman pleaded self-defense and was quickly acquitted by an all-white jury, though the crime took place in broad daylight and ample evidence suggested otherwise.[82] Furious, Miller wrote, "After the recent mockery of justice in Hayneville, Alabama—all decent people must react with shame and revulsion at the perversion of justice perpetrated there… It is 'open season' on the murder of Negroes and their White friends in the sunny South…[83]

Miller knew that law enforcement had become an integral part of the problem, though he was shocked to discover that in the summer of 1965, the infamous Sheriff Jim Clark of Selma, Alabama, had been elected Vice President and President-Elect of the National Sheriff's Association. Clark was known for intimidating and humiliating black voters. News photographers captured Clark wielding a baton over a young black woman's head and prodding marchers with electric cattle prods.[84] Most infamously, Clark and his "sheriff's posse" attacked marchers in Selma on what became known as "Bloody Sunday."[85] Upon hearing of Sheriff Clark's election, Miller wrote, "Sheriff Clark is not only a racist – but a sadistic brute with an utter disregard for law and justice and civil liberties…"[86] Though Sheriff Clark would lose his local election that year, disqualifying him from serving as the president of the National Sheriff's Association, Miller wrote to Wichita Civil Rights lawyer and activist Chester Lewis,[87] "[The sheriffs'] vote was a slap at Negroes, at organized labor,

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[82] Jonathan Myrick Daniels and William J. Schneider, *American Martyr: the Jon Daniels Story* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Group, 1992), 11.
[83] Judea Miller. *Rabbi's Message*, undated, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[84] Margalit Fox, "Jim Clark, Sheriff Who Enforced Segregation, Dies at 84," *New York Times* (June 7, 2007). http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/07/us/07clark.html (accessed November 11, 2010).
[85] Ibid.
[86] Letter from Judea Miller to Chester I. Lewis, July 7, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[87] University of Kansas. "Chester I. Lewis, Jr.." Kenneth Spencer Research Library - KU Libraries. http://spencer.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/dreams/chester_i.htm (accessed February 22, 2011).

and at all decent Americans." Law enforcement, not just in the South, but around the country, had become an integral part of the problem.

Despite the violence facing Civil Rights protestors in Selma at the hands of Sheriff Clark and "the sheriff's posse," Miller regretted not being able to stand with Martin Luther King Jr. in the landmark Selma marches. Miller described the marches as "… a major climax that will be long remembered… [and] Here I have been, going into the delta of the Mississippi, being clobbered and arrested and nobody cared. But when the 'triumph' comes – others go and I watch it on television… This is a vain and selfish way to feel."[88] Though Miller played an active role in the Civil Rights Movement in Wichita and Hattiesburg, he felt as though he was watching victory unfolding from the sidelines.

The CCAR, Fair Housing, and Freedom Workers

Now a part of the national conversation, Miller sought to bring Civil Rights issues to the attention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). This was the first of Miller's many attempts to convince one of North America's most influential rabbinical associations to take a stand on matters of social concern. In 1965, Miller proposed two resolutions to the CCAR- the first, to fully support fair (integrated) housing, and the second, to declare support for the efforts of the "freedom workers" in the South.[89] Neither of Miller's initiatives passed, in large part due to the opposition of some of the CCAR's southern rabbis. In a letter to Stanley Chyet, Miller lamented the weak stand that HUC-JIR and the UAHC had taken regarding the Civil Rights Movement:

[88] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 28, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[89] Letter from Judea Miller to Rabbi Kertzer, May 25, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.

> I have met Protestant seminary professors and deans in Mississippi, sometimes even in jail- but I have never heard of a Jewish seminary professor getting arrested. We can't even agree to give Martin Luther King an honorary degree. In fact, we had better hurry up before Mississippi State University beats us to it…"[90]

Leaving Wichita

After five years in Wichita, Miller began to search for a new pulpit. As Anita would later reflect, "It was as though he had outgrown [Wichita]. He was looking for something new."[91] Miller would look back fondly on his time in Wichita, though after five years with Temple Emanu-El, he had begun set his sights eastward. In a letter to Rabbi Malcolm Stern (1915–1994), the Director of Placement for the CCAR, Miller wrote, "I have been extremely happy in Wichita. The congregation has prospered and so have I…" It is clear that Temple Emanu-El of Wichita had been a very good match for Miller. Evidently, Miller's activism and outspokenness meshed well with his congregation in Wichita since his employment contract was renewed twice with unanimous approval, and he was extended a lifetime contract.[92] Miller recognized his good fortune observing "This is quite remarkable because I have never been one to run away from controversy."[93] As Anita would later reflect, "In Wichita, [Miller] was loved."[94]

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[90] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 7, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[91] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[92] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, December 15, 1964, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.

Miller did not expect to love Wichita as much as he did. Prior to his arrival, the congregation was torn with dissention and discord, hemorrhaging membership, and on steady path toward decline. Miller had played a central role in revivifying the congregation. In his letter to Malcolm Stern, he contended that after his five years of service Emanu-El was "a united and active and contented congregation." [95] During Miller's tenure, the congregation completed a successful building campaign and seen its membership swell. Interest in worship services and adult studies had peaked. Apparently, even Miller's controversial involvement with the general community benefitted the congregation. Through his activism, Miller led the congregation to earn a new level of respect within the city of Wichita itself. The congregation was pleased with their new standing in Wichita, and it may partially explain why their rabbi's determined activism galvanized what had previously been a rather fractured community.

Miller was instrumental, not only in his congregation's success, but in advancing the city of Wichita toward his vision of a more just and equitable society. At the end of his service in Wichita, the local chapter of the B'nai B'rith named Miller the "Wichita Citizen of the Year." Miller humorously reflected on this award, writing, "There were times during my agitation for fair housing legislation during the past few years when I thought I would surely be run out of town on a rail (after being properly tarred and feathered)… People sure are fickle (and also, seem to have short memories)."[96] Though Miller enjoyed enormous success in Wichita, he sought to grow in a more active and vibrant city. Looking back at his half-decade of service, Miller wrote, "Frankly, I believe that I could probably

[95] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, December 15, 1964, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[96] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, April 27, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.

remain in Wichita all my days as a rabbi, should I so want. But I do not want to complete my career in Wichita. I feel that I am ready to change to something more challenging."[97]

There was another, more personal reason for Miller's desire to move. In the fall of 1964, Miller's father had a heart attack and died shortly thereafter.[98] This experience convinced Miller that he did not wish to remain so geographically distant from his family. For eight years, Miller and his wife lived halfway across the country from their relatives, and the distance prevented them from seeing their extended families as much as they would have liked. Anita spoke on how the Millers were only able to arrange one a short trip to the northeast during the summer. The death of Miller's father gave a new perspective to this distance. Reflecting on his father's passing, Miller wrote, "Since last November I have never felt so far from my family… Frankly, I do feel guilty. During my father's last illness I did not come to New York City until relatively late. I had no idea he was so deathly ill."[99] Upon hearing that Dave had died, Anita poignantly recalled how Jonathan, the couple's oldest child, asked, "What did Poppy [Dave] look like?" That moment, Anita called, Miller said, "we can't live here anymore."[100] The couple took a map of the Northeast and drew a circle with New York City at the center, extending west to Pittsburgh and south to Washington, D.C. Wherever the couple moved next, they were committed to being close to their New York families.[101]

In the fall of 1964, Miller was offered the senior rabbi position at Tifereth Israel, in Malden, Massachusetts. The Millers were mostly excited for the move from Wichita to

[97] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, December 15, 1964, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[98] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[99] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 28, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[100] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[101] Ibid.

Malden. Malden was a congregation of approximately 450 families -- larger than Emanu-El of Wichita. Another enticement was the rabbinical residence that the congregation owned. The Millers looked forward to moving into the congregation's "huge, beautiful parsonage."[102] Malden was different from Wichita in many ways. In Malden, Miller would be able to associate with other rabbis in the near vicinity, and this was very new and gratifying experience. As his wife later recalled, "Judea was plunked in Wichita, Kansas, and between him and Denver, there was no other rabbi."[103] Malden would certainly mark a shift in Miller's career and provide him with tremendous opportunity for professional growth.

Malden was not without its challenges. At Tifereth Israel, Miller enjoyed being a loud, outspoken, and respected voice in the community. He wrote, "[in Kansas] Governors have listened to what I had to say – newspapers have written editorials about my sermons… [Whereas] in Malden I shall be the rabbi of a middle-sized, not too wealthy, congregation in a community with rabbinical 'giants.'"[104] Additionally, Tifereth Israel and its board were not known for their great respect of the clergy. Miller described the congregation as "… very old, not too large, and it has had a terrible reputation in its treatment of rabbis,"[105] though he joked, "When I met [the Malden board] they did not seem so formidable. Frankly, if a Mississippi red-neck doesn't frighten me, why should I fear a congregational board?"[106] While Miller would eventually become one of most influential rabbis in Boston as well as in the Reform movement during his years at Tifereth

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 28, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.

Israel, the move from a middle-sized Midwestern city to this vibrant Jewish community was initially, for Miller, a mixed blessing.

As Miller prepared to leave Temple Emanu-El, he spent some time with his successor, Rabbi Steven Arnold, acclimating the new Wichita rabbi to the congregation and sharing with him how to best navigate its congregational system. In a letter to Chyet, Miller summarized his own successes and the advice he gave to the congregation's new rabbi: "When I first came here they [the congregation] were timid and afraid and provincial. They have come out of this and feel more excited about their temple than ever before." Miller went on to describe how the congregation had become increasingly interested in Zionism, Hebrew had assumed a more prominent role in the community's worship, and the congregation had fostered strong interfaith relationships with other congregations in the community and even with Wichita State University. These successes did not come easily and, as Miller would reflect on his advice to Arnold, "Steve [needs] to be on his toes and NOT be timid… People are like dogs, when you run they bite. This together with a little *Rachmunis* and *Derech Eretz* and *Ahavat Yisrael* and just plain *Saychel* – is all that a rabbi needs to be 'successful' in Wichita or anywhere else." As he wrote to Chyet, "I just hope I didn't overwhelm the poor guy and seem too much like a pompous ass."[107]

Though he would miss Kansas, Miller was excited for the next chapter that Malden represented. He was looking forward to a city and congregation with more excitement and Jewish activity than his isolated Midwestern rabbinate could provide. He was also relieved to be closer to family. Miller concluded his thoughts on the Wichita by writing,

[107] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, June 3, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.

> I can hardly wait to get to Malden. But I am sad to leave Kansas. We have been extremely happy here. It is as though a major stage in our life is ending… My daughter was born here. My family has matured here. We have many dear and precious friends here, people that we shall never forget. But it is time to move on.[108]

Conclusion

It was in Wichita where Miller assumed the role of Jewish leader, and the passion with which he addressed issues like the State of Israel and the Civil Rights Movement would come to define his career. During these years, Miller emerged as a rabbinic voice, speaking out on Israel's need for self defense, while condemning the violence he viewed as running counter to the state's long-term wellbeing, such as the assassination of Lord Monye. Miller's Jewish values extended his Wichita rabbinate far beyond the Jewish community, leading Miller to take an active role in the Civil Rights Movement. Miller challenged the influential Real Estate Board, which had, until Miller's involvement, successfully kept African Americans out of middle class communities. Miller's Civil Rights involvement inspired his involvement in Civil Rights in the Deep South, where, in 1962 and 1963, he made the dangerous journey to Hattiesburg, Mississippi to support the town's impoverished black community. Miller enjoyed his years as rabbi of Temple Emanu-El and public role in Wichita politics. Though he was apprehensive about playing a more limited role in

[108] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, June 3, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.

the larger Massachusetts Jewish community, he would emerge as one of the most outspoken Boston rabbis and expand his interests and horizons even further.

Social Justice and the National Stage

Tifereth Israel, Malden, Massachusetts

Miller's position as rabbi of Tifereth Israel in Malden, Massachusetts (1965–1973) marked the rabbi's ascent to the national stage. These years were, in some ways, a continuation of Miller's work in Wichita. In scope and scale, however, Miller's time in Boston was radically different. Miller became active in Boston's Civil Rights struggle, seeking to pass state-wide legislation to ensure fair housing and a strike blow against Northern discrimination. His efforts were met with resistance, both from his Tifereth Israel community and from around the country. A sharp rise in Black separatism and anti-Semitism in the mid-1960s presented Miller with the challenge of presenting the Civil Rights Movement to his colleagues and congregants as a moral imperative they could not ignore, while at the same time explaining the cause of Black anti-Semitism and isolating it to the radical fringe of the movement. Miller's social justice work in Malden took on entirely new forms as well, as Miller became increasingly active in the plight of farm workers in the American West. He organized and participated in two fact-finding missions to Delano, California, gathering first-hand reports of the workers' decrepit conditions so that clergy in Boston and throughout the country might be inspired to take a stand. His efforts resulted in an interdenominational state-wide boycott of table grapes throughout Massachusetts, which was shortly followed by a Reform movement-wide boycott of table grapes throughout the country. Miller's work with the anti-Vietnam War movement markedly shaped his later years in Malden. As the Social Action Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, Miller planned a number of protests against the war, with one in

particular leading to the unintended arrest of a number of Boston rabbis. Working within the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), and the Union for American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), Miller's influence within these larger movements and organizations helped give the young rabbi broad recognition for his social justice work. It was during Miller's years as the Tifereth Israel rabbi that he had an impact not only on his congregation and local community, but on state and national entities as well.

Civil Rights in Boston

Miller boldly asserted himself in his new congregation, establishing himself as both a pulpit rabbi and community activist. As his wife, Anita, would later reflect, "In Malden, everyone loved Judea and Judea loved everyone… He was wonderful at [the congregational components of his rabbinate]. He was adored for this."[1] In his wife's opinion, it was Miller's success as a pulpit rabbi that enabled him to take vocal stands on controversial issues while keeping his new job. Though welcomed as a pulpit rabbi, Miller's outspokenness initially took the unsuspecting congregation by surprise.

Though Miller was new to the Tifereth Israel community, he continued his staunch support for the Civil Rights Movement, and he was surprised to find that questions surrounding race and integration cut across northern communities as much as they had the Midwest. Though his new congregation was situated in the more liberal environs of the northeast, Tifereth Israel was ambivalent about Miller's commitment to social action and community involvement, especially his Civil Rights activism.

[1] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 14, 2010.

During the first year of his Malden rabbinate, Miller differed with his congregational leadership over the controversial stands he had taken in the community, particularly in his Civil Rights work. In a 1965 letter to his close friend, Stanley Chyet, Miller wrote, "As of late, I have been getting considerable static about my civil rights activities and speaking. But I don't give a darn. It came up at a Board meeting about a week ago. I offered to resign. The reaction was overwhelmingly in favor of me."[2] Miller continued, describing his successes as a pulpit rabbi and how attendance at congregational functions, especially services, had noticeably improved. Miller wrote, "Attendance at temple has never been better in the history of the congregation. Last Friday night I spoke on "BLACK POWER" (which was in reality about Negro anti-Semitism and Jewish racism)—and the sanctuary was filled to capacity."[3] Though initially a controversial figure, the Tifereth Israel rabbi was committed to broadening and challenging his congregation's perspective while becoming a vocal presence in Boston's community of progressive activists.

Reflecting on his interview with Tifereth Israel and his first few months as their rabbi, Miller wrote to Chyet, "I did mention to [the Tifereth Israel board] my interest in civil rights. This may have frightened them. But I am not interested in going to any congregation that would prevent me from doing what I feel is right. So possibly I may not be so acceptable to Malden."[4] Miller rarely treaded lightly around issues he believed to be of utmost concern, and his commitment to civil rights throughout his seven years in Malden was chief among them.

[2] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 28, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[3] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, October 17, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.
[4] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, February 28, 1965, MS 686, Box 1, File 23, AJA.

Miller continued his efforts to ensure fair housing legislation upon entering the Malden community. To ensure that people of all races, regardless of their current economic condition, had equal opportunity to succeed, Miller worked to pass a Boston "anti-snob" zoning law. The "anti-snob" zoning law, which appeared on the 1972 Massachusetts ballot, would have required "each community to set aside at least a reasonable portion of its housing for the poor and middleclass, for the aged and minorities—for those who for too long have been the unwanted and the forgotten…" Miller wrote, "This law, if strengthened and enforced, would be a significant aide toward the healing of our severe urban housing crisis. It may help to lead our entire society toward the humane goals for which we all pray."[5] The nation's race problem, Miller hoped, would be only temporary. He believed that when white society no longer withheld the resources African Americans needed to succeed, their centuries-long cycle of poverty would be broken.

The 1972 Massachusetts election failed to bring into law the values Miller believed were essential in overcoming the nation's crushing racial concerns. Not only did the "anti-snob" law fail overwhelmingly in the voting booths, but Massachusetts voters that year elected a number of office holders, specifically public school board members, committed to maintaining what Miller considered a racist status quo. Contrasting Boston to the bigotry he experienced firsthand in the Midwest and South, Miller wrote,

> It is ironic to speculate that the South may yet solve its racial problem before the North. More and more, responsible leadership in the Southern urban areas has come to face up this challenge realistically and creatively. In the North, as evidenced by the Neanderthals who 'serve' on the Boston School Committee, -- the problem will remain a long time unsolved. [The newly-elected officials] may speak in the cultured accents of Boston – but their

[5] Letter from Judea Miller to Senator Carrigan, May 10, 1972, MS 686, Box 4, File 13, AJA.

> actions reek of the illiterate bigotry of the Mississippi redneck. 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are hands of Esau…'[6]

Alluding to the bible's distinction between the smooth-talking Jacob and his brash, coarse, and violent brother Esau, Miller describes how the more "civilized" Northeast is as guilty of suppressing black equality as the South.

Though less violent than the confrontational Sheriff Clark of Alabama, Miller understood racism as found in Boston to be equally damaging to African Americans all over the country. Miller channeled much of his work as the rabbi of Tifereth Israel toward addressing such concerns.

The Unraveling of Black-Jewish Relations

By the mid-1960s black-Jewish relations had started to unravel. As demonstrated by the work of Miller and others in the 1950s and earlier, however, this had not always been the case. Near the turn of the twentieth century, blacks and Jews emerged on the national landscape as natural and necessary allies. With the rise of populist anti-Semitism stemming out of American nativism, the two minorities shared common enemies and interests.[7] Among the NAACP's initial leadership were Joel and Arthur Spingarn, two Jewish brothers.[8] Major Jewish figures, most notably Sears Roebuck founder Julius Rosenwald, were crucial in the creation of schools, vocational institutions, hospitals, libraries, orphanages, and even social clubs for America's destitute rural black population. At the height of Rosenwald's philanthropy, it is estimated that 25–40% of black children in the South were educated in

[6] Judea Miller, *Rabbi's Message*, undated, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[7] Maurianne Adams and John H. Bracey, *Strangers & Neighbors: Relations between Blacks & Jews in the United States* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 3.
[8] Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: the Turbulent Times between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York: New American Library, 1995), x.

schools built by Rosenwald.[9] The Jewish community was significant in passing *Brown v. Board of Education* by sponsoring research that demonstrated the psychological impact of discrimination. [10] Continuing their fundraising efforts, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, 75% of the money raised was from Jewish businesses and families.[11] According to Jewish Civil Rights activists, as early as the late 1960s, these efforts did not materialize into an enduring relationship between blacks and Jews. Writing in 1969, Al Vorspan,[12] one such Jewish figure deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement, describes how Jewish support failed for foster a deeper relationship between blacks and Jewish, writing that the Jewish support around this time was "kind and benevolent" but also "colonial."[13] The one-sidedness of the relationship garnered resentment and tension, which, by 1965, grew steadily more pronounced.[14]

American Jews and blacks were drifting apart. As blacks continued to struggle against discrimination and segregation, the 1960s and 1970s were a time when Jews came to enjoy nearly full and unrestricted involvement in American society. In 1965, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg described how American Jews were no longer society's "have-nots," but had decidedly joined the "haves." By the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Jews had become America's most successful minority according to any benchmark- wealth, education, community and national leadership, etc., and Hertzberg predicted that Jews and blacks and Jews would need to reassess their relationship with each other. Within a decade,

[9] Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: a Crisis of Liberalism* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 11.
[10] Kaufman, *Broken Alliance*, xi.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Born in 1924, Vorspan serves as a leading progressive Jewish voice in matters of social justice. Additionally, Vorspan was integral in the establishment of the Religious Action Center.
[13] Nat Hentoff, *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism* (New York: Richard W. Baron Publishing Co., 1969), xi.
[14] Kaufman, *Broken Alliance*. xi.

the two groups by and large did.[15] Many Jewish leaders of Civil Rights organizations were forced out of their positions as African Americans assumed more leadership positions in the movement. African Americans increasingly moved in to Jewish neighborhoods, which, on the heels of a sharp rise in the more separatist Black Power movement and street crime in traditionally Jewish neighborhoods, sparked a new wave of racial tensions. These trends reflected a larger trend of balkanization in American politics, and as each group receded into itself and advocated for their own interests, they moved further away from one another.[16]

Since his work with the Delta Ministry Project, Miller was alarmed by the deteriorating relationship between Jews and African Americans. Aided in large part by Southern Jewish resistance to Black equality, many in the African American community saw little difference between the white Jewish and white Christian communities. For the Jewish community, however, skin color was not the only divide that surfaced when attempting to engage with the Civil Rights Movement. Growing numbers of African Americans, like many of their Christian coreligionists, held a certain religious hostility toward the Jewish community. Religiously-inspired anti-Semitism had taken hold in white and black Christianity alike, with Black Christians labeling Jews as "Christ-killers," just as their white Christian counterparts.[17] Miller understood this dangerous religious reality, and though not a race issue per se, feared that it helped drive a wedge between what he saw as the otherwise common interests of the Jewish and African American communities.[18]

[15] Adams and Bracey, *Strangers & Neighbors*, 6.
[16] Kaufman, *Broken Alliance*, 13.
[17] Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 28.
[18] Duker, *Negro-Jewish Relations*, 23.

Given the risks involved in lending support to the black community, which some in the Jewish community viewed as unambiguously anti-Semitic, many rabbis throughout the country were wary of going out on a public limb. Boston rabbi Daniel Kaplan exposed his concern for this deepening problem in his response to a 1966 survey describing the souring relations between American Blacks and Jews. Kaplan wrote, "I am not saying that [Black anti-Semitism] has reached dangerous proportions yet – but a scapegoat is always needed [and] we [Jews] are a lot easier to attack than the white Protestant or Catholic groups in America."[19] Many in the American Jewish community felt increasingly vulnerable to radical religious influences on both sides of the Civil Rights debate, a reality which had some success in dampening Jewish support for the movement. A growing number in the Jewish community were therefore hesitant to lend support to a community they viewed as hostile and even anti-Semitic.[20]

Miller emerged as a passionate supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, responding to Jewish fears and rallying clergy to the cause. Miller aggressively countered sentiments like Kaplan's and others by describing how the Civil Rights Movement's anti-Semitic currents were gross exaggerations. Miller illustrated his contention by pointing to the NAACP, "the largest Negro civil rights organization," having elected Kivie Kaplan, a Boston rabbi, as its national president.[21] If Black anti-Semitism demonstrated anything, Miller asserted, it highlighted the work that needed to be done on the part of the Jewish community to continue fostering goodwill between the two outsider minorities.[22] Miller wrote, "If you and others are interested in the image of the Jew in the Negro ghetto, go into

[19] Letter from Daniel Kaplan to Judea Miller, October 27, 1966, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[20] Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind*, 76.
[21] Letter from Judea Miller to Daniel Kaplan, October 31, 1966, MS 686. Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[22] Ibid.

the ghetto more and involve yourself with their problems."[23] Miller goes on to describe how countless Tifereth Israel congregants had become involved in Civil Rights work, including at least a dozen children from the Tifereth Israel youth group who traveled to poorer African American neighborhood to tutor school-age children. These efforts, Miller asserted, were essential toward fostering the much needed goodwill between the two communities.[24] In casting Black anti-Semitism as a fringe element of the Civil Rights Movement, and by demonstrating the need for more people in the Jewish community to get involved, Miller tried to dissuade his colleagues from being hesitant in their support of the Civil Rights Movement.[25]

Abuse and American Agriculture

With the Civil Rights Movement in full swing, Miller also focused his energies on another disadvantaged contingency of American society, the immigrant farm worker. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the average farm worker family earned roughly $2,000 per year, well below the federal poverty line.[26] Only 9% of American farm workers at the time were receiving welfare.[27] Annual salary and governmental assistance, however, were only one of a slew of issues that threatened to keep farm workers in a cycle of poverty. There were roughly 800,000 child laborers in America's agricultural fields, and school dropout rates for the children of farm working families were substantially higher than the rest of

[23] Ibid.
[24] Letter from Judea Miller to Daniel Kaplan, October 31, 1966. MS 686. Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[25] Ibid.
[26] *The Farmworkers: A Cry for Justice from Florida's Fields*, pp. 7–8, April 28, 1974, Farmworker Benefit Fiesta Committee, Miami, FL., MS 686, AJA.
[27] Ibid.

the nation.[28] Poor education led to high rates of illiteracy among the exploited workers which, for Miller, guaranteed that this cycle of poverty would continue for at least another generation.

César Chávez (1927–1993), who would lead the effort to unionize these workers in what would eventually become the United Farm Workers (UFW), grew up in just such an environment. Chávez's family left Mexico, lured by the promise of steady work and livable wages in the United States. Chávez was born in Yuma, Arizona where he spent his early childhood. The Depression forced the family to move to California, where the Chávez family traveled throughout the state in search of employment, finally settling in Delano, California in 1940. Chávez joined the military, and after returning from naval service during World War II, Chávez encountered the writings of St. Francis and Mahatma Gandhi and was inspired by their call for non-violence resistance to oppression and injustice. It was Chávez's personal experience as a farm worker in America, combined with the rise of unionization in the first half of the twentieth century that inspired Chávez to establish the UFW, known as *la causa*.[29] To bring the plight of these farm workers to the national stage, however, Chávez needed help, and clergy organizations from around the country were crucial towards aiding his efforts.

Chávez's movement garnered support from a wide spectrum of American clergy, an effort in which rabbis like Miller proved essential.[30] Though what sparked Miller's interest in the plight of Chávez's cause is unclear, he was disturbed by the reports of abuse, poverty, child labor, and illiteracy coming from the immigrant farm worker community and urged

[28] Ibid.
[29] Tejada-Flores, Rick, " César Chávez." The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworker's Union. www.pbs.org/itvs/fightfields/cesarchavez.html (accessed December 7, 2010).
[30] "The Cardinal and the Grapes," *Chaplain's Corner* 15, no. 8 (December, 1968), MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.

Boston's clergy to take a stand. With the disenfranchised farm workers largely prevented by the growers from unionizing, Miller sought to enact a boycott on California table grapes. To garner support, Miller arranged a fact finding mission for himself and Rabbi Jake Landsberg, a friend and local Boston colleague, to go to Delano, California and meet with Chávez to learn more about the farmers' plight.[31]

Upon arriving in Delano, Miller was captured by what he saw as Chávez's selfless concern for others and *la causa's* emphasis on non-violence. In a 1968 diary entry written during the trip, Miller wrote,

> Of all the people we met, the one who rose above the bitterness and hatred was the man who was himself the most hated and beloved. While others spoke in anger, Cesar Chávez speaks with pity and understanding, even for the growers. He knew he was attempting the nearly impossible: to organize the have-nots, the lowest rung on the economic ladder – the farm worker.[32]

Upon his return to Boston, Miller engaged in a heated exchange with Israel Gilfenbain, the president of the New England Terminal Market. Gilfenbain was furious over Miller's proposal for a boycott of California grapes. He countered Miller's efforts by emphasizing how the farm workers were compensated well above the national minimum wage of $1.75 per hour. With Federal employment laws ensuring minimum wage at $1.15 per hour, Gilfenbain asserted that Delano farm workers were compensated roughly 50% more than the national minimum. He went so far as to say that "the farm workers in the

[31] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[32] Judea Miller, "In California, a new generation takes up old fight," *Democrat and Chronicle* (April 27, 1990), MS 686, Box 1, File 19, AJA.

Delano area are the highest paid farm workers in the United States."[33] Miller was disgusted by Gilfenbain's manipulation of these numbers, retorting

> Is [the $1.75 per hour figure] the pay of a foreman averaged with that of a fieldhand? And what does this hourly wage really amount to when it is just seasonal and must feed the family of a farm worker during the seasons too when there is no work? What does this average wage figure tell us about the living conditions of these farms workers or of the basic sanitation facilities available to them when they are on the job? Does this average wage figure that you quote say anything about the strikebreakers being brought in from Mexico at the expense of our own striking citizens, or of the armed guards and terror used by the growers? Does your hourly wage figure explain anything about the grinding poverty and degradation of these farm workers? Does your hourly wage figure explain the unjust face that these farm workers are being denied the right given to every other American worker: the right to bargain collectively through a union?[34]

Having seen the living conditions of the workers first hand, Miller asserted that there was a darker side to Gilfenbain's $1.75 figure, and that this income level should not obscure what he saw as a human rights crisis unfolding on American soil.

Miller began his effort to boycott table grapes, first within Jewish communities throughout the state of Massachusetts, and then throughout the country. At the time, Miller was serving as the Social Action Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis (MBR), a body of rabbis representing the Jewish interests of the Massachusetts Jewish community.

[33] Letter from Judea Miller to Israel Gilfenbain, June 19, 1968, MS 686, Box 1, File 19, AJA.
[34] Ibid.

Coming back from a second trip to Delano, California, Miller drew up a 67 page report with pictures and first hand testimony on what he witnessed there. Miller presented his findings to the MBR and suggested that the state's rabbis enact a boycott of California table grapes throughout their Jewish communities. The Board unanimously rallied behind Miller's recommendation, despite pressure from within the Jewish community to stay removed from the conflict. With Miller's report in hand, the MBR issued the following statement, written by Miller:

> The Massachusetts Board of Rabbis, consistent with the Talmudic injunctions against '*oshek*- the oppression of a hired man' – is concerned that the farm workers are a last vestige of labor oppression in our nation. The farm workers are a group that has thus far been excluded from coverage of Federal labor and minimum wage laws. Vast groups of farm workers are exploited with substandard wages and dehumanizing living conditions. We… call the attention of our congregants to the present strike of the grape pickers in California… We therefore, urge Jewish congregations to consider that California table grapes are unfit for use in a synagogue or synagogual function until this strike is settled.[35]

The Jewish Advocate lauded Miller's role in persuading the MBR: "Despite outright misrepresentation and distortions by official organizations of employing farmers and the wailing of some elected spokesmen of retail operators… [Miller] almost single-handedly convinced his colleagues of the righteousness and goodness of the Chávez goal."[36] Miller's

[35] Letter from Judea Miller and Murray Rothman, December 13, 1968, MS 686, Box 1, File 19, AJA.
[36] *The Jewish Advocate* (August 6, 1970): no page.

success with the MBR, however, would become a stepping stone toward passing a national, movement-wide boycott of table grapes by the UAHC.

The UAHC met for its 51st biennial in the fall of 1971, where Miller, following his success with the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis in 1970, raised the issue to the national stage. His primary task was to bring Chávez to speak at the Biennial, a move which encountered resistance both from UAHC and Chávez's staff. Miller was in communication with Al Vorspan, Miller's contemporary and leading Jewish figure in the Civil Rights Movement and one of the organizers of the Biennial, to arrange a time during the event when Chávez could speak. Upon learning that the Biennial's schedule was already full, Miller wrote to Vorspan describing what a lost opportunity it would be if the Biennial failed to sensitize movement leaders to *la causa*. Miller wrote, "Even if an extra ad hoc session has to be arranged late at night after the regular sessions, our delegates should still somehow be given an opportunity to meet and hear Chávez."[37] This was assuming, however, that Chávez was even willing to speak.

Chávez, whose UFW movement had since generated tremendous momentum, was initially reluctant to participate in the UAHC Biennial. Though Miller had worked directly with Chávez through *la causa's* early years, the Farmworker's Union had grown exponentially, and Miller was only able to communicate with Chávez through his assistant, Andy Anzaldua, whom he had never met. Anzaldua told Miller that Chávez received far more invitations for speaking engagements than he could attend, the vast majority of which being from entrepreneurial event coordinators seeking to boost attendance at their functions by having Chávez's name on the program. Insulted, Miller assured Anzaldua he

[37] Letter from Judea Miller to Albert Vorspan, June 28, 1971, MS 686, Box 1, File 24, AJA.

had no such intention. Miller insisted that his sole intention in inviting Chávez was to support a movement about which he was passionate and lend Chávez's cause maximum exposure through the avenues Miller had at his disposal. Miller wrote,

> At this Biennial Convention there will be delegates, let alone speakers, who are Senators, Congressmen, Judges, Statesmen, world-renowned Theologians, etc. Cesar Chávez would be needed *not* because he is a 'name,' but because he may possibly win to *la causa* a major American religious body.[38]

Chávez accepted the invitation.[39]

Efforts like Miller's helped to bring the plight of immigrant workers to the national stage and were essential toward giving *la causa* a religious voice. The UAHC passed a resolution at its 51th biennial calling for its rabbis to boycott table grapes from California and Arizona, to urge congregations and congregational affiliates to join the boycott, and lastly, to pressure the United States Congress to extend collective bargaining rights to these farm workers.[40] Three years later, the Farm Worker Movement reported labor contracts benefitting over 30,000 workers at nearly every ranch in California and Arizona.[41]

The Vietnam War Protest Movement

Miller's stance on non-violence extended beyond Chávez's *la causa* and the unionization of the nation's fieldworkers. Malden's Reform rabbi was also an active opponent to the United States' military involvement in Vietnam. The Vietnam War evolved

[38] Letter from Judea Miller to Andy Anzaldua, September 16, 1971. MS 686. Box 1, File 24, AJA.
[39] No notes were preserved from the 1971 UAHC Biennial. The nature of Chavez's speech, therefore, is unclear.
[40] Judea Miller, Thanksgiving prayer, undated, MS 686, Box 1, File 19, AJA.
[41] *The Farmworkers: A Cry for Justice,* 18–19.

in three distinct stages, and with each escalation, Miller became an increasingly active supporter of the anti-war movement. The American role in the first stage of the war was nominal, with the United States military serving in an advisory capacity to its allies in the conflict. This stage ended following a series of Viet Cong attacks against American bases in March 1965. Reacting to these offenses, the United States launched "Operation Rolling Thunder," an aggressive aerial campaign that dropped millions of tons of bombs on Vietnamese targets in a 44 month period. March 1965 also marked the arrival of 3,500 American ground troops in Vietnam, which started what would become a rapidly escalating US presence on Vietnamese soil. The third stage of the war began with what became known as the Tet Offensive of January, 1968, in which the Viet Cong and their allies rose up against the South Vietnamese and their allies in a well-coordinated surprise attack, resulting in widespread military and civilian casualties. Though these efforts ended in failure, they were successful in shaking American illusions of victory in the region. This realization marked the third stage of the war, one in which conventional military strategy was forced to grapple with the reality that the conflict in Vietnam presented Americans with no clear path to "victory." Over two and half million Americans fought in the Vietnam War, with nearly fifty thousand killed in action.[42]

Reacting to Operation Rolling Thunder, Miller became an outspoken critic of Vietnam War long before the public's opinion on this effort began its precipitous slide. In the fall of 1966, Miller wrote an article deeply critical of the war, published in Boston's *Saturday Evening Post*. Though Miller supported the self-determination of the Vietnamese people and their fight against the encroaching Soviet Union, he described with horror the

[42] Dave Richard Palmer, *Summons of the Trumpet: U.S.-Vietnam in Perspective* (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), preface.

number of civilian casualties at the hands of the United States military. Miller wrote, "If the freedom and self-government of the [Vietnamese] people of South Vietnam is our cause, then it is indeed a just one. But the fact remains that in this 'just' struggle against Communism, we are killing civilians surely as any Communist ever did."[43] For Miller, what differentiated the American involvement in Vietnam from the Soviet Union's was the democratic values that compelled the United States to prioritize the value of human life. With Operation Rolling Thunder in full force, however, Miller questioned if the United States had lost its moral distinction and questioned whether it was advancing its goals in the most just and effective way. Miller wrote, "[W]hat if the ends do not justify the means…? The survival of the people of Vietnam must be seen as the real issue, and it can be resolved not by force but by patience and understanding, in the framework of a willingness to live and let live."[44] In pursuing its political agenda, the heavy handed Communist government was responsible for tremendous loss of life. Aligning himself with the budding anti-war movement, Miller started to wonder how American policy was different.

Miller's voice was part of a small but growing wave of Jewish opposition to American involvement in Vietnam. The Executive Board of the CCAR had expressed early reservations about American action, which led to a CCAR resolution issued the day following the beginning of Operation Rolling Thunder. Though the 1965 resolution fell short of advocating a unilateral American withdrawal from Vietnam, it voiced the rabbis' fears of escalating Vietnamese suffering and the offensive's potential to spur a nuclear war

[43] Judea Miller, "Beware of Being Sheep," *Saturday Evening Post* (October 22, 1966): 2–3, MS 686, Box 6, File 28, AJA.
[44] Ibid.

with the Soviets.[45] Lastly, the CCAR resolution called for a diplomatic solution to the escalating conflict. The spread of communism, it asserted, would not be "stopped by bullets, but by bread, education, and hope."[46] The CCAR was soon joined by Conservative and Orthodox leaders, presenting a growing interdenominational front protesting further military engagement in Vietnam.

American support for the war plummeted after the 1968 Tet Offensive, and as the odds of success grew ever slimmer, the calls to disengage from Vietnam grew ever louder. Against this backdrop of American escalation, Miller participated in and led a number of anti-war protests throughout the early 1970s in an effort to shift US involvement with Vietnam. One of the protests in which Miller planned, however, went awry, devolving into chaos and violence and leading to the incarceration of a number of university students and rabbis. Miller's protest marked one of the few times throughout the Vietnam War era when rabbis were arrested for their anti-war activities.

Miller envisioned the protest as an organized, well-disciplined, hour long rally. Miller held a number of planning meetings to ensure that the rally was executed smoothly and according to plan. The protest was to be held outside of the Federal Building on the morning of May 17th, 1972. It was scheduled to begin at 11:00 am and end no later than 12:00, so as not to interfere with the building workers' lunch hour. Miller also carefully instructed participants only to obstruct the entrance to the building, and for the sake of the workers, not to enter. As Miller wrote, "we had no ill feeling toward [the workers. We] were protesting only against the war and against the administration that had decided to escalate

[45] Irwin Zeplowitz, "Jewish Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War," rabbinical thesis (HUC-JIR, 1984), 41.
[46] Ibid.

the war."[47] The rally would start with a short worship service, and participants would block the entrance to the Federal Building for the remainder of the hour. [48] Though arrest was possible, Miller sought to preserve the non-violent intentions of the protest. If participants were arrested, Miller instructed them not to resist so as to prevent the protest from turning violent. In his planning, Miller went so far as to contact the local law enforcement to coordinate the event and to emphasize the rally's non-violent nature.

Miller's careful planning, however, was to no avail. Though Miller and the vast majority of the rabbis organizing the event adhered to its orderly structure, when the protest ended, it rapidly devolved into chaos. Over one hundred demonstrators, led by six defecting rabbis – Herman Blumberg, Lawrence Kushner, Daniel Polish, Herman Pollack, Benjamin Rudavsky, and Cary Yales – were "frustrated that the police did not arrest them while they were outside, and therefore, went indoors purposely to provoke arrest."[49] Rabbi Blumberg described how he and his five colleagues remained in the building, making speeches, singing Hebrew songs, and disrupting the workers as long as it took for law enforcement to intervene.[50] The six rabbis, along with twenty three protestors, were arrested for trespassing and obstruction of federal property."[51] All of the six taken into custody were Reform rabbis, three of whom having been ordained in the late 1960s and were in seminary at the time of the Vietnam draft.[52] For Miller and the MBR, who had coordinated the event with law enforcement to avoid such an incident, their arrest tarnished Miller's relationships with public officials he had spent years building.

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[47] Letter from Judea Miller to Louis Brin, May 22, 1972, MS 686, Box 1, File 16, AJA.
[48] Zeplowitz, "Jewish Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War," 214.
[49] Ibid., 215.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 216.
[52] Ibid., 217.

The six renegade rabbis and those who followed them into the Federal Building lamented the MBR's refusal to escalate the protest, sharply criticizing the representative body for their peaceful demonstration. They were shocked by the "forfeiture of moral leadership demonstrated by the spokesmen for the MBR" and felt as though they had to take action by breaking ranks.[53] They felt betrayed, especially by Miller and the event's organizers, describing the statements made by Miller and the MBR leadership that morning, "of undermining the will of many Rabbis… [making them appear] as pusillanimous temporizers, infected by a failure of nerve and purpose."[54] For the defectors, the rally's discipline was not a sign of strength, but of weakness and of failure to do their utmost to end a senseless war. These rabbis and their supporters publicly accused Miller and the MBR of conspiring with the authorities and collaborating with the "Mayor of Boston's legal counsel" to avoid arrest. [55] The protestors felt that, had they had not persisted in getting arrested, "the MBR would have been completely disgraced in the eyes of the community."[56] Miller's protest, in their eyes, was not against the government, but instead became a shameful extension of it.

The organized Jewish community was not sympathetic to these rabbis' appeals. Facing lawyers' fees and court fines, the six rabbis called upon the Jewish community to support their actions by footing their legal costs. In doing so, the rabbis argued that the community would be showing its sympathy for the rabbis' actions and furthering the anti-war movement. The rabbis directed their appeal to Herman Brown, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council (JCC) of the Greater Boston Area, urging the Council to use

[53] Ibid., 216.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Letter from Judea Miller to Louis Brin, May 22, 1972, MS 686, Box 1, File 16, AJA.
[56] Zeplowitz, "Jewish Attitudes," 216.

its community funds in their defense. The JCC not only withheld all funding to offset the rabbis' legal fees, but refused to publicize their involvement in the protest.[57] Though the JCC was never openly critical of these rabbis' actions, they made it clear that such escalation, in the eyes of the Boston Jewish community, were viewed as nothing more than aberrant whims of a small number of Boston's Jews.[58]

No one was more disappointed with the outcome of the protest than Miller. He was horrified by these rabbis' actions and what he viewed as an impulsive decision to break ranks. Though he supported his young colleagues "courage and commitment," he was deeply troubled by their "rebuttals, catcalls, and demagoguery [which caused the] orderly and dignified demonstration [to turn] into a mindless mob."[59] For Miller, the decision to enter the Federal Building and disrupt its activities for the sole purpose of getting arrested "was made on the spur of the moment with little apparent forethought" for its consequences.[60] Highlighting these rabbis' lack of responsibility and foresight, Miller expressed his surprise that more people did not get hurt.[61]

What seemed noble and necessary from the point of view of the defectors, Miller viewed as reckless and dangerous, not just for those who escalated the protest, but for relations between Massachusetts's Jewish and secular community. When publically accused of conspiring with the government, Miller was not shy to mention that he contacted local law enforcement to explain the protest and to emphasize its peaceful intentions. As Miller wrote, "I did not do this to entreat any indulgence. I did this to let

[57] Ibid., 214.
[58] Ibid., 216.
[59] Ibid., 215.
[60] Letter from Judea Miller to Cary Yales, May 23, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 17, AJA.
[61] Ibid.

[them] know that we were prepared to be arrested and would not resist. It was done to avoid violence, not to avoid arrest."[62] For the MBR, arrest was certainly not the goal of the protest. As Miller wrote to a supporter of the six rabbis, "arrest per se was *not* the stated goal and object of the demonstration and the act of civil disobedience. Apparently this was not made clear enough to those who were so eager to be arrested."[63] For Miller, these rabbis' actions sullied the public image of the MBR, and by extension, Miller's role in the organization. The rally also damaged much of the goodwill Miller had developed over the years between the Jewish community and the city's secular leadership.

The impact of this failed anti-war rally on the Jewish community, however, was short-lived. While more radical voices called for additional protests of this kind, the primary concern within the organized Jewish community was the upcoming presidential election. The 1972 election was only months away, and McGovern's Democratic challenge to President Nixon captured the Jewish community's political energies. With an election on the horizon, the summer of 1972 also marked a dramatic de-escalation of the Vietnam War. Many of the ground troops returned home, leaving a smaller force of pilots and servicemen in the region to continue the aerial campaign against the Viet Cong. As American casualties in Vietnam declined, so did the Boston Jewish community's support for radical anti-war protests.

Miller's Rabbinic Search

Miller would look back fondly on his years in Boston, where he was successful both as a congregational rabbi and a public figure in the community. Anita reflected back at this

[62] Letter from Judea Miller to Louis Brin, May 22, 1972, MS 686, Box 1, File 16, AJA.
[63] Letter from Judea Miller to Cary Yales, May 23, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 17, AJA.

time as one where Miller was both beloved by Tifereth Israel and entrenched in the social justice work of the city. After seven years with Tifereth Israel, however, Miller began searching for another position. "It was almost as though he outgrew [Tifereth Israel]," Anita said. "He was looking for something different."[64] As had Temple Emanu-El in Wichita, Tifereth Israel had extended Miller a lifetime contract. As Miller described this offer to Malcolm Stern, the Director of Placement for the CCAR, "It is an attractive offer and flattering on their part. But I am wondering whether I am still professionally 'too young' for such a commitment."[65] As Miller began his job search, he closely considered a number of positions in the Northeast, particularly congregations in Riverdale, New York, and Larchmont, New York. Miller would eventually decline these congregations for a number of reasons.

Riverdale Temple was socioeconomically similar to Tifereth Israel and close to the Bronx community in which Miller grew up. Though "ideal for [Miller's] style of rabbinate," Miller was troubled by the congregation's stance on intermarriage.[66] Riverdale Temple's policies "not only tolerated [the performance of intermarriage] on the part of the associate rabbi, but encouraged [it].[67] Years later, Anita would opine that Riverdale was too close to Miller's childhood community. Her husband, she averred, had little desire to return to a place where his congregants and members of the neighborhood's larger Jewish community might remember him as "little Judea."[68] With an insufficient salary, a challenging

[64] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[65] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, December 4, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, February 9, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[68] Phone interview with Anita Miller. October 5, 2010.

intermarriage policy, and proximity to his childhood community, Miller decided to decline the offer from Riverdale Temple.

Miller also declined a position at Larchmont Temple, another New York pulpit, but for a number of different reasons. A wealthy congregation in an affluent suburb, Larchmont Temple was culturally dissimilar from any Jewish community Miller had known or served. In a letter to Rabbi Malcolm Stern, the Director of Placement for the CCAR, Miller wrote, "Larchmont seemed, as is well expressed in Yiddish, like a schmaltz-gribenes[69]… Larchmont gave me a comfortable, almost 'antiseptic' feeling."[70]

With over thirteen years of working as a rabbi in the diverse and integrated communities of Wichita, Kansas and Malden, Massachusetts, Miller felt at home among people of this socio-economic status. He believed that these were places where he would be able to speak "forth concerning delicate issues" such as fair housing and segregation. Miller viewed Larchmont as little more than a "wealthier version of Malden… neither larger nor more active, nor was it more interesting." [71] Miller was also concerned with how long Larchmont Temple had been looking for a new spiritual leader. As Miller confided in his letter to Stern, "Larchmont is really a 'plum' for any rabbi, and I do not understand why they should have any trouble finding a competent rabbi. In fact, this was one of the main reasons for my decision [to decline their offer]: Larchmont should have less trouble locating a good rabbi than Malden."[72] Larchmont's "lily-white" suburban feel, its distance from the social justice issues to which Miller had dedicated much of his career, and the

[69] "Schmaltz-gribenes," also known as "schmaltz and gribenes," is an Ashkenazi dish consisting of chicken fat and fried chicken skins. Miller's use of this term likely reflects his sentiments that Larchmont appeared as an indulgent community, just as "schmaltz-gribenes" was an indulgent food.
[70] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, December 4, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[71] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, February 9, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[72] Ibid.

notion that Larchmont represented a lateral career shift all led the rabbi to decline Larchmont Temple's offer.[73]

Miller's primary reason for declining these two positions however, was Anita's legal training. Anita was in her second year of law school at Northeastern University in 1972, and leaving at this juncture would have prevented her from completing her degree.[74] Not wanting to divide the family, the Millers decided to wait another year before moving. In the following months, Temple Brith Kodesh (TBK), a large congregation in Rochester, NY of roughly fourteen hundred families, began their rabbinic search. For Miller, TBK represented an ideal opportunity to advance his career in one of the most prestigious and diverse congregations in the country.[75] He interviewed with the congregation on January 16-17, 1972, and was unanimously approved by the board shortly thereafter.[76]

Conclusions

Miller's career in Malden extended far beyond his rabbinate with Tifereth Israel. During his seven years at Tifereth Israel, Miller was a lecturer at the Boston Academy of Jewish Studies, Vice President of the Boston Jewish Community Council and Chairman of its Program Committee, Executive Board Member and Social Action Chairman of the MBR, Director of the NFTY Mitzvah Corps, and held a number of other community positions and offices.[77] As Anita looked back on her husband's years in Boston, "Every single cause in the

[73] Letter from Judea Miller to Malcolm Stern, December 4, 1972, MS 686, Box 6, File 3, AJA.
[74] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 14, 2010.
[75] No author, "Temple to Consider Applicant," *Democrat and Chronicle* (March 25, 1973): page 13b, MS 686, Box 6, File 7, AJA.
[76] Letter from Philip Bernstein to Malcolm Stern, April 3, 1973, MS 686, Box 1, File 11, AJA.
[77] Letter from Henry Rubens to TBK Community, March 8, 1973, MS 686, Box 6, File 5, AJA.

world erupted at that time, and he was involved in every single one of them."[78] Miller described his time in Boston in a correspondence with Rabbi Meyer Strassfield, retiring rabbi of Temple Sinai in Marblehead, MA, writing, "Those were complex years… [but] What a time to serve as rabbi, especially in an exciting, creative, challenging community such as the greater Boston area."[79] Like Temple Emanu-El in Wichita, Tifereth Israel represented for Miller not just a pulpit, but a chance to leave a mark on his community. More importantly, it was time when Miller was successful in reaching out toward Jewish organizations on both the state and national level, and to offer them spiritual leadership and ethical guidance.

Miller was warmly received by his new congregation upon his arrival in the spring of 1973. Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein (1901–1985), Miller's nationally renowned predecessor at TBK from 1926–1973, capped off a celebratory Shabbat on April 1, 1973 in Miller's honor. It was on this Shabbat when the young rabbi was formally elected to become TBK's next spiritual leader. Bernstein introduced Miller to his new congregation by expressing his wishes for the new rabbi. Bernstein ended his speech, writing,

> When Jerusalem fell to the Romans the emperor struck a coin to commemorate the event and on it were the words: Judea capta, Judea devicta. Judea captured, Judea conquered. Let me take a bit of historic liberty and say, we have captured Judea. Now may he conquer our hearts. I give you the man whom I hope you will elect as your next rabbi, Judea Miller.[80]

[78] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 5, 2010.
[79] Letter from Judea Miller to Meyer Strassfield, May 4, 1989, MS 686, Box 6, File 1, AJA.
[80] Philip Bernstein, Installation of Rabbi Judea B. Miller, April 1, 1973, MS 686, Box 6, File 7, AJA.

Miller was unanimously approved by the five hundred members of the congregation present, which, as Bernstein wrote, "makes it official, and, of course, pleases us all."[81] This night marked Miller's formal entrance into the last and most colorful years of his career.

Miller's years in Malden prepared him lead to Tifereth Israel, one of the largest congregations in the country. Continuing his passion for fair housing, Miller worked, albeit unsuccessfully, to pass fair-housing legislation for the state of Massachusetts. He was successful, however, in urging his Reform colleagues to take a more vocal stand against segregation. Broadening the horizons of his social justice work, Miller played a key role in rallying the Massachusetts Jewish community and later the entire UAHC support behind the American farm worker in the American West. Miller was also active in Massachusetts' anti-war movement, planning one of the state's landmark rallies. Miller's Boston rabbinate, however, marks the beginning of the rabbi's refocusing onto primarily Jewish issues. Though Miller would devote himself to combating the death penalty and the assisting refugees fleeing war-torn South America, his years with Temple Brith Kodesh were primarily centered on Israel and the Soviet Jewry crisis. As Miller left for Rochester, his professional and personal life was on the cusp of change.

[81] Letter from Philip Bernstein to Malcolm Stern, April 3, 1973, MS 686, Box 1, File 11, AJA.

Transformation and Twenty Years in the Rabbinate

Temple Brith Kodesh, Rochester, New York

Miller spent the majority of his career fighting society's shortcomings. He ended his rabbinate confronting his own. Miller's first and foremost passion throughout his career was the State of Israel, both its physical and spiritual well-being. Miller's commitment to Israel contributed to the unraveling of his relationship with the African American community which, by the time Miller arrived in Rochester, had largely turned against the Jewish State. Miller petitioned American officials against the sale of arms to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and worked one-on-one with Palestinian officials in the hope of achieving peaceful relations between the two communities. Miller also tried to heighten American awareness of the plight of Jews still living in Muslim countries after Israel's independence. In the late 1970s, Miller was critical of American Jews who publicly opposed the official policies of Israel. He spoke out against left-leaning Jewish organizations like Breira, a Jewish organization generally critical of Israeli policies, though later in his career he would express public criticisms of his own. Miller believed that Israel had no choice but to fight relentlessly for its right to exist, but he came to the conclusion that the state lost much of its innocence in its seemingly unending military struggle against its neighbors. So long as Israel continued pursuing a policy of peaceful coexistence, however, Miller maintained that Israel would always preserve its Jewish character.

Miller was deeply committed to the well being of Israel, but he was equally concerned about the welfare of Jews throughout the world. In light of the Holocaust and the Six Day War, and in the context of Vietnam political activism that swept the Jewish

community, Miller became a prominent and unwavering activist on behalf of the Soviet Jewry movement. As the second half of the 20th century progressed, the USSR stifled nearly all avenues of Jewish education and cultural expression, while curtailing most professional opportunities for Russia's Jews. It also curbed Jewish emigration, which had nearly come to a halt in the mid-1980s. On behalf of one family in particular, the Lozanskys, Miller leveraged his relationships with Congressmen and Senators and galvanized support from Nobel laureates and nationally renowned newspapers like the New York Times. Miller was ultimately successful, and helped to incorporate these Rochester immigrants and other Soviet Jews in the United States into American congregational life.

Miller's active interest in a variety of international causes never eclipsed his deep involvement in domestic issues. Disturbed by reports of violence in Central America and America's lukewarm response to a flood of refugees, Miller played a key role in advancing what came to be known as the Sanctuary Movement, a movement dedicated to providing safe passage for what were deemed "illegal" Central American refugees. Miller petitioned his congregation and then the CCAR to take an active stand against what he considered an immoral refugee policy. Through Miller's efforts, Temple Brith Kodesh (TBK) became the second Jewish community in the United States to become a Sanctuary congregation. Some time later, the CCAR, after much prodding, adopted a resolution of its own in support of the Sanctuary Movement.

In addition to his activism on behalf of the Central American refugees, Miller took a prominent stand against capital punishment. He firmly believed that capital punishment was contrary to Jewish values, and he was particularly disturbed by the fact that the American judicial system disproportionately imposed this severest of punishments against

minorities and primarily against blacks. Miller tried to generate Jewish and interdenominational support against the death penalty, but as the idea of capital punishment continued to grow in popularity throughout the Jewish community and American society, Miller's efforts were largely fruitless.

Yet it was during this same period that Miller personally battled another social malady: alcoholism. He struggled to overcome this affliction for the remainder of his life. Miller's problems with substance abuse had been a private concern long before it overtook his public career in 1985, when he struck and nearly killed a pedestrian while driving under the influence of alcohol. After returning from a month of intensive recovery, Miller slowly disclosed his story to his family, his close friends, and to his rabbinical colleagues. With his story in the open, Miller sought to raise awareness of addiction in the Reform Movement, the Rochester Jewish community, and in the Rochester community at large. All the while, Miller worked to remain sober. He was an active participant in Alcoholics Anonymous, but he struggled to make a place for himself in this largely Christian faith-based group as a Jew and a rabbi.

Miller's struggle with addiction led him to reconsider the values and priorities that had guided much of his politically charged and sometimes dangerous career. Looking back at his life, Miller came to regret the pain he caused within his family, and the seemingly nonchalant way he would put his own life at risk. He came to measure his life's success, not only by the values and causes to which he had dedicated himself, but to how he lived, who he loved, and what he could offer to the people he valued most. As Miller turned his focus from his external struggles- Israel, Soviet Jewry, the Sanctuary Movement, and capital

punishment, to his personal struggles -- addiction and family -- he began to revise his definition of life's failures and successes.

Introduction to Miller's Connection with Israel

The state of Israel played a central role in Judea Miller's rabbinate. Although his relationship with the Jewish State would evolve over the course of his career, Miller remained a passionate Zionist throughout his life. For Miller, the establishment of the State of Israel marked the beginning of a new era for world Jewry. He was convinced that Israel's existence assured the Jewish people of security and self-determination for the first time in nearly two thousand years. Miller frequently compared the birth of the Jewish state with the story of Jesus' resurrection. In teaching moments with non-Jews, Miller would compare the reconstitution of the Jewish state in 1948 as analogous Christianity's conceptualization of death and resurrection. Miller wrote, "the Holocaust to Jews is not unlike the Passion is to the thinking of Christians. So, too, the emergence of the State of Israel is to most religious Jews today what the Resurrection may be to the thinking of Christians."[1]

Yet Miller's commitment to Israel sometimes provoked tensions and turmoil in his career. In the 1980s, Miller's support for Israel negatively affected his longstanding relationship with the African American community. Although he never hesitated to come to Israel's defense in correspondence with black leaders and elected officials, Miller never proffered Israel his uncritical support. As Israel grew stronger throughout the decades, Miller became wary and, at times, even critical of its politics. Toward the end of his life, Miller thought that peace in the Middle East was close at hand. He died hoping that Israel's

[1] Letter from Judea Miller to Matthew Clark, February 3, 1986, MS 686, Box 2, File 1, AJA.

tumultuous past was ebbing and the dawn of a new, peaceful epoch for which he had long prayed was close at hand.

A New Relationship with the African American Community

Miller's ongoing commitment to Zionism, combined with a marked shift in the struggle for African American equality, dramatically changed Miller's relationship with the black community. Dr. Michael Meyer, a scholar of modern Judaism, explained that the shifting focus of the movement from civil rights to economic issues "unleashed anti-Semitism … at Jews." A new sense of "Black militancy and separatism now frustrated the continuing desire of Jewish liberals to support the black cause as if it were their own."[2] Though Miller had dedicated much of his early career toward working with the disadvantaged African American community, his relationships with black leaders in Rochester grew increasingly tense during the 1980s.

Anti-Semitism had taken new forms since World War II, and Miller was particularly sensitive to how these sentiments manifested themselves in the African American community. In a letter to Reverend Frank Snow (1928–2000), head of the Interfaith Chapel at the University of Rochester, Miller described America's new sensitivity to outward "expressions of Jew hatred" after the Holocaust.[3] As a result, Miller said, anti-Semitism manifested itself in new two new forms. The first was "to debunk the Holocaust, insisting that it never occurred or that it was exaggerated, or so universalizing its victims that it is no longer seen as a Jewish tragedy." The

[2] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 368.
[3]Snow was a Protestant clergyman who served as the head of the Interfaith Chapel at the University of Rochester from 1972–1991. See *Currents*, a publication of the University of Rochester, May 22, 2000. http://www.rochester.edu/currents/V28/V28N10/inbrief.html (accessed on February 13, 2011).

second, Miller wrote, manifests itself in the guise of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel rhetoric."[4] Miller saw both Holocaust denial and anti-Zionism as growing trends in the African American community.

Miller's relationship with the black church soured as the community turned increasingly against Israel. In a 1982 letter to the editor published in Rochester's newspaper, the *Democrat and Chronicle*, the Reverend Raymond Graves (1928–2010), the president of the United Church Ministry (a broad coalition of black churches in Rochester), wrote a virulent condemnation of Israel titled, "'Terrorism' deplored." In this article, Graves criticized Israel's "immoral and unjustified aggression," against Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. Graves was responding to the Sabra and Shatila massacres, when in September, 1982, a Lebanese Christian militia entered a refugee camp and massacred hundreds of refugees. Many of Israel's critics, including Graves, held Israel directly accountable for the attacks. Graves wrote,

> The United Church Ministry… deplores the illegal presence of the Israeli armed forces [ ] and the immoral and unjustified aggression perpetrated by the Israeli government in the name of 'peace.' The terrorism of the Israelis leveled against the innocents… must stand condemned by all progressive people, but especially by the Jewish American community.[5]

Graves continued, calling for "an immediate cessation of relations with Israel" until the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.[6] He ended his letter, writing, "How much longer are we to tolerate this barbaric encroachment and its justification based on political

[4] Letter from Judea Miller to Frank Snow, May 25, 1982, MS 686, Box 6, File 1, AJA.
[5] Raymond Graves, "'Terrorism deplored," *Democrat and Chronicle* (July 14, 1982), no page, MS 686, Box 6, File 19, AJA. Raymond L. Graves became a prominent civil rights activist in Rochester where he remained for the rest of his life. For more on Graves, see http://www.whec.com/news/stories/s1902750.shtml and http://rocnow.com/article/local-news/2010101222019 (accessed on February 13, 2011).
[6] Ibid.

paranoia and a perverted and historically distorted theology?"[7] For Graves, who represented nearly all black religious organizations in Rochester, Israel was not only acting unjustly, but with its "perverted and historically distorted theology," was illegitimate from its inception. Miller, who had played an active role in bridging Rochester's black and Jewish leadership together, sent a letter to a number of his rabbinic colleagues in response to Reverend Graves, writing, "Unless there are some public repudiations of this from our Black friends, I expect to enjoy many more pleasant, meeting-free evenings with my family this coming year."[8] Though Graves sought to clarify his position in private correspondences with Miller, Rochester's black community fell short of issuing a public repudiation. Miller's relationship with Rochester's African American leadership would never recover.

Miller's relationship with the black church community deteriorated further when the African American community became increasingly cognizant of Israel's economic and political alliances with apartheid South Africa. During the 1980s, the repressive character of South Africa's apartheid government became a topic of international concern. In 1962, the United Nations formed a "Special Committee against Apartheid," and by the early 1980s, the international community was calling for member nations to boycott South Africa and any nation that allied itself with that nation's apartheid government. The Reverend John S. Walker, who then served as the Executive Secretary of the Office of Black Ministries, sent Miller and undated clipping from the Christian Science Monitor labeling Israel and South African as "an outlaw alliance of pariah states."[9] It continued by identifying Abba

[7] Ibid.
[8] Letter from Judea Miller to Rob Pisen, Shamai Kanter, William Blank, and Ned Saltz, July 20, 1982, MS 686, Box 6, File 19, AJA.
[9] July, 1983 Reverend John S. Walker, Ph.D. is currently the spiritual leader of the Faith Christian Ministries in Rochester, New York. See, http://www.faith-christian-center.org/meetus.html, accessed on February 13, 2011.

Eban (1915–2002), a native of South Africa and, at that time, the Foreign Minister for the Government of Israel, as a tangible link between Israel, South African apartheid and Zionism. The article continued by drawing a nebulous connection between the Nationalist Party assuming control of South Africa and the proclamation of Israel's independence, because, the author claims, they both took place in 1948.[10] Walker commented on this article in an attached letter, writing,

> It is staggering to conceive of an oppressed people aligning themselves with the most barbarous government in the world. Yet much is being written about this relationship… Afrikan [*sic*] American people will not nor can we support Israel or the Jewish American community if allegations such as the above are true.[11]

The American Jewish community, according to Walker, was not only inseparable, but in a way, responsible for Israel's actions. In his condemnation of Israel, Walker condemned America's Jews.

Miller was deeply troubled, not just from the claims black representatives in the Rochester community leveled against the State of Israel, but also from the increasing anti-Jewish sentiment he had come to observe in the community with which he had worked for so long. Miller expressed these concerns to Walker, asserting that the reverend's critiques against Israel went far beyond the Jewish State's relationship to South Africa. Miller responded to Walker, writing, "Your target is now coming to targets closer to home (against Jews in America), it is not?"[12] Miller continued by noting how ironic that the *Christian Science Monitor* article based much of its insidious connection between Israel and

[10] Frank Goheen, "The Christian Science Monitor," *Mutual benefits* (July, 1983): no page, MS 686, Box 6, File 12, AJA.
[11] Letter from John Walker to Judea Miller, July 25, 1983, MS 686, Box 6, File 12, AJA.
[12] Letter from Judea Miller to John Walker, July 29, 1983, MS 686, Box 6, File 12, AJA.

South Africa on the figure of Abba Eban and his South African origin. Miller forcefully rejoined:

> [Abba Eban is] . . . .among the most vocal opponents in the Israeli parliament against the policies of the present Likud government, particularly concerning the rights of Arabs and the need for more efforts to achieve peace and justice in the Middle East. He has also been outspoken as a critic of apartheid in South Africa and oppression everywhere. His own nephew was killed flying relief planes to Biafrian refugees in Nigeria.[13]

For Miller, Walker's comments contradicted reports of significant Jewish efforts to end apartheid in South Africa. Miller called attention to Frank Bradlow and M.M. Borkum, two Jewish leaders in the South African parliament calling for an end to the government's apartheid.[14] He later described how the South African Jewish community joined the white opposition to apartheid far beyond their percentage in the general population.[15] Miller saw the American and South African Jewish communities as doing everything possible to fight racism in South Africa and lamented the criticism leveled against the Jews in both countries in return.

Miller's final concern with sentiments like Walker's was that they drew focus away from the real issue of apartheid at hand. Miller wrote, "To use Israel as a scapegoat for apartheid in South Africa is to blind all of us to the real problems there."[16] Miller concluded his letter reaffirming his commitment to end the South African apartheid and calling for Walker to reconsider his anti-Jewish sentiments.[17] Miller wrote, "I would hope that your passion for justice in South Africa, which I believe I share, will not bring you across the brink of anti-Semitism toward American Jews. Your latest letter comes perilously closer to

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[13] Letter from Judea Miller to John Walker, July 29, 1983, MS 686, Box 6, File 12, AJA.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Letter from Judea Miller to Richard Prince, November 21, 1988, MS 686, Box 2, File 9, AJA.
[16] Letter from Judea Miller to John Walker, July 29, 1983, MS 686, Box 6, File 12, AJA.
[17] Ibid.

that than I would have suspected."[18] As anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiments continued to rise in the African American community, Miller drew away from his work with this former ally.[19]

Congressmen, Senators, and Miller's Advocacy for the Jewish State

For Miller, however, Israel faced far greater dangers than the rising antisemitism in the African American community. Throughout the 1970's and 1980s, the US government considered a series of arms sales to Israel's neighbors, moves which greatly frightened Miller and others in the Jewish community. Miller used his contacts in the House and Senate to protest the sale of US weaponry to Israel's enemies, reflected in a series of correspondences between Miller and his elected representatives.

Near the end of his presidency, Nixon proposed sharing nuclear technology and weapons systems with Egypt. Miller expressed his shock in a letter to Congressman Frank J. Horton (1919–2004), Miller wrote, "I am appalled and alarmed at President Nixon's atomic give-away proposition for Egypt. Neither the mood, the spirit nor the mentality of the Egyptian State can assure anyone of its peaceful intentions."[20] He recalled Egypt's role in "start[ing] the Yom Kippur War and provoke[ing] the wars of 1967 and 1956," and relayed his fears that the United States would be unable to prevent another attack.[21] "With the Palestinian terrorists waiting to utilize these [nuclear weapons] as small arms," Miller protested, "and with this atomic gift closing the scientific and technological gap between

[18] Ibid. If Walker responded to Miller's letter, it was not preserved in Miller's files.
[19] Letter from Judea Miller to Rob Pisen, Shamai Kanter, William Blank, and Ned Salltz, July 20, 1982, MS 686, Box 6, File 19, AJA.
[20] Letter from Judea Miller to Frank Horton, June 28, 1974, MS 686, Box 3, File 7, AJA.
[21] Ibid.

Egypt and Israel, it creates a new imbalance in the situation."[22] Miller believed that Israel's military advantage against its enemies was essential toward ensuring peace in the region, and by boosting Egypt's nuclear capacity, Nixon threatened to destabilize the entire region.

Miller saw Israel's military edge challenged yet again in the summer of 1981 as the US considered a sale of F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia. In a letter to Congressman Barber B. Conable Jr. (1922–2003), Miller expressed the "grave danger" America and Israel would face if the plan to sell "the most powerful weapons in the American arsenal to Saudi Arabia" went through.[23] In Miller's opinion, Saudi Arabia "opposed the Camp David peace process, vilified President Sadat, financed the terrorist PLO to the price of 400 million dollars a year, and called for a jihad, or holy war against Israel."[24] Miller believed that such a country could not be trusted with American weapons of this caliber, and that they posed a grave threat to America's closest ally in the region.

Israel depended on its advanced weaponry to maintain stability in the region, which it used in 1980 to destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor. Israel's preemptive actions in Iraq drew sharp international criticism, which Miller countered publically and privately with elected officials. In a letter to Senator Alfonse D'Amato (b. 1937), who had been recently elected New York State Senator in 1980, Miller defended Israel's attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor:

> Criticism of Israel for using American-made Phantom jets in the attack that destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor is as ill-timed as the Israeli raid was well-aimed…What could be more defensive than that pre-emptive strike against an Iraqi nuclear reactor specifically and openly dedicated to producing atomic bombs for the avowed destruction of Israel? If there are any protests to be sent, rather they should be sent to the French who supplied both the technicians and weapon-grade uranium to build the reactor. To have supplied this to Iraq with its present mad, bellicose leadership is like giving

[22] Ibid.
[23] Letter from Judea Miller to Barber Conable, August 5, 1981, MS 686, Box 2, File 3, AJA,.
[24] Ibid.

> an infant who in the midst of a temper tantrum a sharp razor blade with which to play."[25]

In his reply, D'Amato applauded the Israeli raid, writing that Israel had no other choice "but to destroy the Iraqi reactor which would have produced an atomic bomb capable of the destructive force which leveled Hiroshima."[26] For the Senator, "The Israeli raid was an act of self-defense, nothing more."

With President Jimmy Carter in office, Miller was concerned that the US's support of Israel's enemies stemmed from more than American's economic interests and reflected an anti-Israel sentiment at the highest echelons of the government. Miller perceived the Carter administration's view on Israel as intrinsically flawed and deeply one-sided. Miller was particularly troubled by an off-the-record statement made by President Carter the summer of 1979 which unintentionally betrayed his sentiments. On August 1st, 1979, the New York Times printed an article on a press dinner hosted by Carter in which the President fondly compared the PLO to America's Civil Rights workers. Speaking on behalf of the Rochester Board of Rabbis, Miller wrote,

> If that newspaper report is correct, you actually compared that bloodthirsty, terrorist organization to the civil rights movements here in the United States. [The PLO] that boasts they were the murderers of children at Maalot and Kiryat Shemona, those murderers of Olympic athletes, those assassins—you dared to compare them to the non-violent protestors of the American civil rights movement! We [the Rochester Board of Rabbis] are outraged by such a vile comparison… It comes in bad taste for you now to make such obscene analogies between movements that protested non-violently injustice and segregation in the United States with the violent murderers of the PLO.[27]

For Miller, the PLO embodied destruction and murder. The organization's actions stood in sharp contrast to the non-violent Civil Rights Movement to which Miller had

[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Letter from Judea Miller to Jimmy Carter, August 2, 1979, MS 686, Box 1, File 22, AJA.

dedicated much of his career. Rather than issue an apology, Dan Chew, a Staff Assistant to President Carter, defended the President's remarks by informing Miller and the Rochester Board of Rabbis that the reporter should have kept Carter's comments confidential.[28] To Miller's chagrin, Carter never issued an apology or clarification.

Miller's Israel advocacy work involved a number of different fronts. Miller combated anti-Israel and anti-Semitic biases in the African American community and maintained close relationships with US policy makers to ensure their full support of Israel's well-being. Across the world, Miller also formed relationships with key Palestinian leaders. In a 1974 visit to Israel, for example, Miller met with unnamed Palestinian leaders who, to Miller's surprise, also advocated for peace. Reflecting on his trip to Israel in a letter to Harold Ticktin, an attorney, Israel activist, and speaker in Cleveland, Ohio, he confessed he returned home with "new insight" concerning the Palestinians: "there were people of quality and leadership ability in the Palestinian community" he observed, "who were not at all in the extremist wing of the PLO."[29] For Miller, the private tone of the leaders with whom he had met contrasted sharply with their public exhortations for revenge and destruction. Miller concluded that "One of the most confusing ironies is that Arab leaders are more complex and conciliatory in private than they are in public; and more interesting, too. In public they seem like prisoners of their most extremist point of view."[30] Though these Palestinian leaders privately sought a peaceful existence with Israel, they were unwilling to face the political and personal consequences of stating these views publically.

[28] Letter from Dan Chew to Judea Miller, August 27, 1979, MS 686, Box 1, File 22, AJA.
[29] Letter from Judea Miller to Harold Ticktin, March 25, 1975, MS 686, Box 6, File 4, AJA.
[30] Ibid.

Miller published these views in an undated document titled, "A Jewish Response to Arafat."[31] In this document, Miller described his frustration with the discrepancies between Arab leaders' public and private views. He described an undated incident wherein he served as the Jewish delegate of American clergy from the National Council of Churches. With the approval of the US and Israel, Miller and the National Council of Churches met with Yasir Abd Rabu (b. 1944), a spokesman for the PLO in the PLO's Beirut headquarters.[32] In their private conversation, Abd Rabu expressed generous offers for peace. Miller repeatedly asked the Palestinian leader to put his offers in writing but, although these talks lasted six days, Abd Rabu refused to accede to the rabbi's request. In his written reflections on this encounter, Miller concluded that "The terrorists were themselves terrorized. What [Abd Rabu] said to me privately, he did not then dare state publically or in writing. He was afraid of his own extremists. And for good reason."[33]

Miller was frustrated with these leaders' non-committal stance on peace, but expressed his hope that coexistence was truly possible. Miller concluded this document by acknowledging that diplomacy and negotiation may now be the most fruitful path to follow in dealing with the Palestinian leadership: "What is most sensible of all" he wrote, "is that we cast aside whatever wistfulness we may have for the simple world in which Palestinians always said, 'No,' and begin thinking through what is necessary for Jews to do, now that we at last may be hearing 'yes' for an answer."[34] Miller's first-hand experiences with Yasir Abd Rabu gave him hope that there might very well be a willing Palestinian partner for peace.

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[31] Judea Miller, "A Jewish Response to Arafat," undated, MS 686, Box 8, File 3, AJA.
[32]Yasir Abd Rabu (a.k.a. Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yasser abu Bashar) is today a senior PLO official and aide to Prime Minister Mahmud Abbas. Cf., http://www.jpost.com/home/article.aspx?id=207965, accessed on February 13, 2011.
[33] Judea Miller, "A Jewish Response to Arafat," undated, MS 686, Box 8, File 3, AJA.
[34] Ibid., 7.

Reflecting back on these talks fifteen years later, however, Miller wrote how many of these Palestinian leaders with whom he had met had since been murdered by their own political extremists.[35]

Jews in Arab Lands

Miller was particularly concerned for Jewish communities that remained in Arab countries after Israel's formation. Syria, for instance, had a Jewish community numbering over 4,500 Jews in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In light of the growing tensions in the Middle East, Miller struggled to focus communal attention on the plight of Syrian Jewry and other Jewish communities that lived in Arab nations. In a "fact sheet" that Miller sent to Jewish students on college campuses, he described the Syrian Jewish community as

> …being held like a hostage community. They are not allowed the rights other Syrians may have. They are harassed and persecuted, but they are not permitted to leave Syria. They are being held like captives and are treated as 'scapegoats' to be punished for the wars that the Syrians and other Arab countries have lost to Israel.[36]

In the mid-1970s, Miller was a member of the CCAR's Committee on Jews in Arab Lands. In a letter to his rabbinical colleagues written on behalf of this CCAR committee, Miller suggested that congregational rabbis use the weekend of February 21–23, 1975 (*Shabbat Zachor*) "to mark the first *yartzeit* of four young Jewish girls who were raped and murdered when they tried to leave Syria through a sort of latter-day *Aliyah Beth*." Miller wrote that the commemoration will serve to generate awareness throughout the American Jewish community as to the dire circumstances facing their "Jewish brethren locked in

[35] Letter from Judea Miller to the editor of *Democrat and Chronicle*, March 26, 1990, MS 686, Box 2, File 9, AJA.
[36] Letter from Judea Miller to Tami Kafin, Jamie Kotch, Jeannie Comora, Michael Rhodes, and Steven Munzer, January 22, 1980, MS 686, Box 3, File 15, AJA.

Syria."[37] As Miller later wrote in a letter to Gerald Zelermeyer, Rabbi of Emanu-El Synagogue in Hartford, Connecticut, "An attack on any Jew… is an attack on all of us. We are indeed one Jewish people."[38]

Breira and the American Jewish Left

Following the Yom Kippur War, Miller was troubled by a growing left-wing Jewish movement within the Jewish community which was publically critical of Israel's policies. The first major organization of this kind was called "Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations," commonly referred to as "Breira." Breira, meaning "Alternative," was a left-leaning organization founded after the Yom Kippur War that was deeply critical of Israel's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[39] Though by 1977, Breira ceased to formally exist, the organization caused a tremendous uproar in the American Jewish community.

Miller was particularly troubled, not just by Breira's politics, but its intended audience. In a letter to Rabbi Henry Siegman (b. 1930), then serving as the Executive Vice-President of the Synagogue Council for America, Miller wrote, "My objection to Breira is that they debate the issues not in a magazine such as *Moment*, but rather in the general press such as the *New Republic* and the *National Observer.*"[40] Miller issued a public

[37] Letter from Judea Miller to Colleague, January 8, 1975, MS 686, Box 6, File 19, AJA.
[38] Letter from Judea Miller to Gerald Zelermeyer, August 19, 1983, MS 686, Box 6, File 17, AJA. Zelermeyer is a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In 2011, he was serving as the spiritual leader of Congregation Har Shalom in Potomac, MD. See http://www.harshalom.org/whoweare/staff.asp (accessed February 13, 2011).
[39] Emily Nepon, "New Jewish Agenda." http://www.newjewishagenda.net/breira.php (accessed March 23, 2011).
[40] Judea Miller to Henry Siegman, May 17, 1976, MS 686, Box 1, File 15, AJA. Siegman was born in 1930 in Frankfurt, Germany. After immigrating to America, he studied at City College and New School for Social

statement in response to the organization, part of which was cited in an exchange with Rabbi Balfour Brickner (1926–2005), an American Reform leader and social activist who had worked closely with Miller in the past as the co-director of the UAHC's National Commission on Social Action. Bricker, however, also served as a board member for Breira.[41] Miller wrote, "… I do not condemn Breira for speaking throughout the American Jewish community, but I do condemn them for not being concerned that they may undermine the support of Israel in the general community at a precarious time."[42] Brickner described Miller's comments as "way, way out of line!" and "viscous and unwarranted."[43] Miller replied that "neither of us [Brickner and Miller] do what we do for popularity."[44]

Miller also questioned what right, if any, Diaspora Jewry had over determining Israel's foreign policy. In a separate letter to Brickner, Miller suggested that only Israelis could be trusted with this task. Miller wrote,

> The issue is that it is the Israelis who must bear the consequences of any decision they make, not we. They alone have the awesome solitude of sacrifice. That is why it is appropriate for [Israelis] to speak out about 'risks for peace.' But it is arrogantly presumptuous for those of Breira to do so when they live far from the anguish of siege and terror… I believe that it is fatuous of Breira to preach from the safety of New York City to Israel on ways of peace.[45]

Breira was deeply problematic for Miller. He perceived the organization's efforts as undermining the survival of an endangered nation and provided fodder to further fuel the anti-Israel and antisemitic sentiments growing throughout the US. Miller also believed that

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Research. He was ordained as an Orthodox Rabbi by Yeshiva Torah Vadaath. He served as a chaplain in the Korean War.

[41] Marjorie Hyer, "U.S. Jews Beginning to Go Public in Criticism of Israel," *Washington Post* (May 3, 1977): A2, MS 686, Box 1, File 15, AJA.

[42] Letter from Judea Miller to Balfour Brickner, September 2, 1975, MS 686, Box 1, File 15, AJA.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Miller and Brickner were close friends and like-minded Reform rabbis, and though the conflict over Breira divided the two, there is no evidence that they remained at odds with each other.

[45] Letter from Judea Miller to Balfour Brickner, March 21, 1977, MS 686, Box 1, File 15, AJA.

only those who would bear the consequences of diplomatic risk-taking had the right to advocate for concessions and compromises in the negotiating process.

Miller's Evolving Relationship with the Jewish State

Though Miller remained a committed Zionist and staunch supporter of the State of Israel throughout the course of his career, Israel sometimes fell short of what Miller hoped it could be. Miller described how Jews, unlike people of other traditions, never had to grapple with the ethical challenges of holding power. Miller voiced these thoughts in a 1980 article that appeared in the magazine *Sh'ma,* writing, "For the past two thousand years of exile Jews have generally been powerless… Unable to defend ourselves physically, Jews developed a keen sense of morality and made a virtue out of gentleness."[46] Since the founding of the State of Israel, however, Jews for the first time took responsibility for bearing arms. Miller continued, "We now have Israel and it is well able to defend itself. It has had to fight for its survival since its founding day. But Israel has learned to do this effectively. Also, since the founding of Israel Jews are no longer so vulnerable… or innocent."[47] Miller wondered what being Jewish meant after Israel's founding. Was the "tough, Spartan-like Jew" [48] authentically Jewish? This image, Miller wrote, "...may be consistent with the values of the Biblical books of Joshua and Judges. But what of the later values of a Micah or Hillel or Baal Shem Tov?"[49] Drawing upon Judaism's prophetic

[46] Judea Miller, "How Normal Should a Jewish State Be?" *Shma, a journal of Jewish responsibility* 11, no. 204 (December 26, 1980): 30.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

tradition and his own understanding of rabbinic Judaism, Miller sought to infuse the State of Israel with the Jewish values he held dear.

Miller viewed these prophetic and rabbinic values as woven into the fabric of Israeli society. In the same article, Miller described an Israeli play about an Arab village, Hirbet Hizeh, which Israeli soldiers had forced its residents to leave during its War of Independence.[50] Miller saw the play in 1978, reflecting, "[The play] was disturbing. But the incident described was not an atrocity, nor were the Israeli soldiers particularly callous or cruel. Many of us who had been in other armies in other wars saw far worse atrocities."[51] Though the concept of Jewish soldiers forcing people to leave their village conflicted sharply with Miller's view of Jewish ethics, the play captured Miller's sense of prophetic Judaism because of the effect it had on Israeli society. Miller wrote,

> Far more significant for me than the dramatization of Hirbet Hizeh' was that Israelis still would agonize over the moral implication of such a wartime episode – and could still feel pity for even an enemy. Is this just *Galuth* squeamishness, or is it being authentically Jewish…? Incidents like [Hirbet Hizeh]… may occur in the passion and exigencies of continual war and the ever present danger of Arab terrorism. But if the time ever comes when Israelis no longer agonize over them, then one may question whether the Jewish state is authentically *Jewish.* For to be a Jew is many things. But not the least among these is to feel that to be a Jew is a moral calling."[52]

For Miller, the fact that Israel had to engage in war was one of the unfortunate realities of the modern nation. That it agonized over doing so, however, was what made the state "Jewish."

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[50] Anita Shapira, "Hirbet Hizah: Between Remembrance and Forgetting," http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-74510337/hirbet-hizah-between-remembrance.html (accessed March 23, 2011). Hirbet Hizah marks one of the first broad instances in modern Israeli society in which Israelis looked self-critically at aspects of the nation's origins.
[51] Judea Miller, "How Normal Should a Jewish State Be?" *Shma, a Journal of Jewish Responsibility* 11, no. 204 (December 26, 1980): 30.
[52] Judea Miller, "How Normal Should a Jewish State Be?" 30.

Nearly a decade later, Miller would reconsider the views he exchanged with Brickner on the topic of Breira. Miller wrote in the 1988 May/June edition of the *Jewish Frontier* about how the only American Jews who seemed to voice their thoughts on Israel were the "extremist hard liners and religious zealots."[53] Miller came to take immense pride in the strength of free press and democracy in Israel, which he saw as key toward ensuring its moral standing. Miller wrote, "…let us also be reminded that in Israel there is still a free press to criticize government policy, and an independent judiciary to correct injustice and discipline authorities when they act unjustly. Above all, there is still public opinion in Israel who speaks out in protest."[54] The conversation on Israel in America needed more of the rich and nuanced discussion Miller found in the Jewish state. Miller lamented that "the impression is created that American Jews are unanimous in our agreement with wrongheaded policy, when so many Israelis themselves are not in agreement."[55] Miller understood Israel as a country with diverse public opinion, and in the last decade of his career, he wondered why diversity in the American Jewish community's understanding of Israel was lacking.

Miller concluded the article advocating for a more robust discussion on Israel and the high moral standard to which the Jewish state should be held:

> Let no one fear criticism. It is this freedom that helps keep Israel democratic and Jewish, and worthy of the respect of the world. Israel seems to be held to a moral standard above that of other nations. Tens of thousands were murdered by Assad in Syria, and many more throughout Third World dictatorships. No one seems outraged or concerned, including the press. But Israel is not a Third World dictatorship. It may be unfair and uncomfortable

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

to be held to higher moral standards. But is also a compliment. It is something of which Jews and we Zionists may be proud."[56]

Conclusions on Miller's Relationship with Israel

For Judea Miller, the ideals of Zionism and a commitment to Israel were primary concerns. Yet as one might well expect, his feelings and views on Israel evolved over the course of his career. As a teenager, Miller personally abetted the illegal shipment of weaponry to the *Yishuv* with his *Ha'Bonim* youth group as the fledgling nation fought to survive. Israel's physical safety and well-being continued to be a top priority concerns for Miller as his career progressed. He worked to stem the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment he saw rising in the African American community, and he lobbied congressmen and senators by protesting arms sales to Israel's enemies. He was an unswervingly loyal partisan, and his devotion spurred him to compose a brutally sharp letter to Jimmy Carter when he thought the President was characterizing Israel's bitter enemies as champions of freedom. Toward the end of his career, as Israel military and economic strength grew, Miller became an advocate for the state's Jewish mores. He urged Israel to protect and promote the ideals of the Jewish prophets as well as the democratic values that have influenced American culture. Miller conceived of a Jewish state wherein these two influences became the core of the nation's identity.

Miller's greatest hope, however, was for Israel's peaceful coexistence with its neighbors. Miller passed away the summer of 1995, just months before Israeli Prime minister Yitzchak Rabin's assassination. These were the most hopeful months in Miller's lifetime, as Miller envisioned the end to Israel's ongoing conflict with the Arab world to be

[56] Ibid.

close at hand. In an editorial to the editor of Rochester's *Democrat and Chronicle*, Miller wrote:

> Since that historic handshake on the White House lawn between Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO's Chairman Yasser Arafat, Israel and most of its Arab neighbors have been rushing toward peace. Israel and the PLO no longer see each other as demons, but now as partners working together toward peace. Despite all the difficulties that still lie ahead, we may feel confident that the forty-six year war between Israel and the Palestinians is over. For Israeli parents it means that their sons no longer have to risk their lives patrolling Gaza or dodging the stones of the Intifada. Also for Palestinians it provides an opportunity to take responsibility at last for running their own lives. The long border between Israel and Jordan is now like the border with Egypt, peaceful and safe and open. Who would have thought all this possible a year ago? Peace burst forth suddenly like a bright comet. It seems like a miracle…[57]

Soviet Jewry: Introduction to Judaism in the USSR

Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union had begun in earnest with the final decades of the 19th century. In the forty years between 1875 and 1914, nearly 2.5 million Jews left Eastern Europe for the United States, 1.5 of which came from the oppressive Czarist Russia.[58] Though the Soviet Union was never hospitable towards its Jewish population, the plight of Soviet Russia's Jews grew progressively worse throughout the 20th century. Reflecting the state of Soviet Jewry in 1971, Richard Cohen, a scholar of Soviet Jewry, itemized a number of key indicators that demonstrated the precarious state of the USSR's Jews. Under Soviet law, for example, all nationality groups had the right to form their own school systems and teach their own languages and cultures. As Cohen was completing his

[57] Letter from Judea Miller to the editor of *Democrat and Chronicle*, September 30, 1994, MS 686, Box 2, File 9, AJA.
[58] Henry L. Feingold, *Silent no More: Saving the Jews of Russia, the American Jewish Effort, 1967–1989* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 2.

study in 1971, however, he found no Jewish schools at any level throughout the USSR.[59] This circumstance stood in sharp contrast to the state of Jewish education in the early 1930's, when there were over 160,000 Jewish students in 11,000 Jewish classes. By 1971, nearly all avenues for Jewish education had been closed.[60] In 1953, for example, the USSR had sixteen Jewish theaters and two theater academies. By 1971, these institutions had also ceased to exist.[61]

The decline in Jewish religious and cultural opportunities coincided with a marked drop in secular educational opportunities for Jews throughout the Soviet Union. At its peak in 1935, Jewish enrollment in Soviet institutions of higher learning was 14.5 percent. By 1970, that number had fallen to 2.5 percent.[62] In 1937, Jews comprised 10.4 percent of the Communist Party Central Committee. By 1971, of the 241 Committee members, only one was a Jew.[63] Jews in the sciences had fallen from their 16.8 percent peak to roughly 7 percent by the late 1960s.[64] The number of synagogues in the USSR had gone from 1,103 in 1926 to 450 in 1956, to 40 in 1971. There were only three rabbis available to serve those 40 synagogues. The baking of matzah and the ritual of circumcision had, at various instances in the 1950s and 1960s, been declared illegal.[65] By and large, Jewish religious institutional life had come to an end in Soviet Russia. For nearly a quarter of the world's surviving Jewish population, the future looked bleak.

Emigration emerged as the only option for a viable Jewish future. At the same time, the Soviet Union began to restrict the number of Jews who could leave the country – a

[59] Richard Cohen, *Let My People Go,* (New York: Popular Library Eagle Books, 1971), 143.
[60] Ibid., 144.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 143.
[63] Ibid., 144.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 146–147.

drastic and unexpected shift in Russian policy. Jews who were denied exit visas by the Soviet government came to be known as refuseniks. The refusenik movement began in the mid-1950, growing exponentially following Israel's success in the Six Day War. In the time leading up to 1980, roughly 60,000 Soviet Jewish emigrants applied for exit visas each year. In 1979, it seemed as though a non-discriminatory Soviet emigration policy was on the horizon with a record 52,320 Soviet Jews allowed to leave. The 1980's, however, marked a precipitous decline in Jewish emigration. In 1980, Jewish immigration fell from its 1979 peak to 21,471, in 1981, 9,400, and in 1982, 2,692. By 1986, that number had fallen to 914, and immigration was largely kept around or under 1000 from that point until the fall of the USSR.[66] This led to growing frustration in the Jewish community and a renewed drive to assist Russian Jews who wanted to leave the oppressive regime.[67]

Scholars have suggested a number of reasons for the drastic shift in Soviet emigration policy, most notably political tensions with the United States, economic stagnation, and social unrest. Hebrew University scholar Theodore Freidgut has asserted that, in exchange for freer Jewish emigration, Moscow expected a quid pro quo in its relations with Washington in the form of technological aid and increased trade. The Soviet Union also expected a review of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which the United States used to pressure the Soviet Union to end its "degree tax" leveled against all Soviet emigrants with higher education (which specifically targeted Jews). The Carter Administration, however, ignored the 1979 Soviet gesture, thereby all but eliminating Moscow's motivation to ease its emigration policy. Additionally, the Soviet economy,

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[66] Theodore Friedgut, "Passing Eclipse*."* in *Soviet Jewry in the 1980s: The Politics of Anti-Semitism and Emigration and the Dynamics of Resettlement*, ed. Robert Freedman (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 5.
[67] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 317.

burdened with a crippling bureaucracy, was teetering on collapse. The "plan" to address these systemic failures was to develop a program to promote a more rigorous work ethic and tighter work discipline. Soviet society, in the eyes of its leaders, needed more and harder working citizens. Soviet leadership wanted to curtail the "brain drain" that was the result of the emigration of some of its brightest and best educated citizens, a number of them Jews. Lastly, minorities who sought to emigrate were seen by their neighbors as "deserting a sinking ship and of leaving the Russians to clean up the mess left in the wake of the [Soviet] revolution's failures."[68] Alcoholism, infant mortality, and other social ills spread throughout Russian society. The educated and relatively sober Jewish community was seen as crucial to addressing Russia's systemic problems.[69]

Perhaps the single most troublesome aspect of the increasingly vocal Jewish community was how it served as a link to the world outside the closed-off Soviet Union. From the 1950s through the 1970s, over 270,000 Soviet Jews had left the Soviet Union. Their phone calls, letters, and photographs being sent to family still in the Soviet Union were considered to be the greatest flow of information into the Soviet Union from the outside. These correspondences were one of the few ways in which anyone in the Soviet Union came into contact with the free world and learned about life in the West without encumbrances by the Soviet censors.[70]

[68] Friedgut, *Passing Eclipse*. 7.
[69] Ibid., 6–7.
[70] Ibid., 12.

American Jewry and Soviet Jewry

Through his work with the Civil Rights Movement, Miller initially viewed the African American community as a natural ally to the cause of Soviet Jewry. His efforts to foster allies in the black community who would be willing to speak out on behalf of Soviet Jews were a part of a larger objective to spread awareness of their plight throughout the United States.[71] Jonathan D. Sarna describes how the Soviet Jewry movement, until the mid-1960s was understood as "parallel to the black struggle for freedom in the United States."[72] As Martin Luther King declared at a 1963 "Conference on the Status of Soviet Jews,"

> I cannot stand idly by, even though I live in the Unites States and even though I happen to be an American Negro, and not be concerned about what happens to my brothers and sisters who happen to be Jews in Soviet Russia. For what happens to them happens to me and to you, and we must be concerned… The struggle for the Negro people for freedom is inextricably interwoven with the universal struggle of all peoples to be free from discrimination and oppression.[73]

As the Soviet Jewry movement began to coalesce in the 1960s and 1970s, however, a number of factors helped to make the cause a decidedly Jewish issue. This era marked a shift in African American political activity from the non-violent Civil Rights Movement to a more separationist and sometimes militant movement. At the same time, Israel's struggle for survival and its decisive victory in the Six Day War helped to spread American Jewish awareness for Jewish communities all over the world. Israel's military prowess fostered a deep sense of pride in what the Jewish people could overcome. Ensuring the welfare of the Soviet Union's Jews became a galvanizing cause for Jews, particularly in the United States and Canada. There were a number of factors that helped to precipitate American Jewish

[71] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 317.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Cohen, *Let My People Go*, 11.

participation. According to Sarna, "American Jews [were] "…sensitized to their failings during the Holocaust era" and "schooled by the sixties in political activism."[74] Their deft exploitation of Cold War politics helped to advance the Soviet Jewry movement throughout the country, eventually becoming "the centerpiece of their 'religious action' programming."[75] With the Holocaust and Six Day War behind them, the then-present spirit of political activism, and the threat of tremendous Jewish suffering ahead, Soviet Jewry became one of the most important Jewish causes of the latter half of the 20th century.

The Jews of the USSR were equally enamored with Israel's success in the Six Day War, which largely inspired the community to challenge the Soviet government's anti-Jewish legislation and heavy-handed enforcement. "Only in the aftermath of the Six Day War," Sarna noted, "did the cause of Soviet Jews turn into a mass movement. Russian Jews… experienced a cultural and political awakening after Israel's victory," and even dared to challenge their government's anti-Semitic policies.[76] As the Soviet government continued to restrict its Jewish population, emigration became a last and only hope for a Jewish future. The result of worldwide Jewish efforts on behalf of the Soviet Jews ultimately led to one of the largest emigrations of Jews in history, as over 1.5 million Jews fled their homes.[77]

Miller's Involvement in Soviet Jewry Movement

Beginning in the early 1960s, Miller took an active role galvanizing American support for Soviet Jewry. Miller's wife described how her husband, while still in Wichita, refused to eat matzah one Passover Seder in protest of the Soviet government's crackdown

[74] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 318.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 317.
[77] Ibid., 318.

on the making matzah.[78] He was one of the first and most active rabbis in Massachusetts to foster broad support for the USSR's Jews.[79] Near the end of Miller's tenure in Malden, for example, he spearheaded a large interdenominational rally on Yom Kippur in support of Soviet Jewry. Seven congregations and thousands of Jews—Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox—were involved. After the morning service, the rabbis of each congregation, each carrying a Torah, led their congregation to Miller's rally as the Boston Jewish community united in their support.[80] The rally, which made national news, was one of many ways Miller helped to bring the issue of Soviet Jewry to the American Jewish conscience.

Upon arriving to Rochester, Miller suggested that his colleagues consider a number of liturgical alterations to the traditional holiday liturgy that would serve to raise awareness of the plight of Soviet Jews. During the celebration of *Simchat* Torah, for example, Miller suggested adding an extra *hakafah* "that will be done in solemn silence in honor of the 'Jews of Silence.'" At other holidays or events, when appropriate, Miller suggested that congregations might place six empty chairs on the bimah in honor of "the six most famous refuseniks: Sharansky, Nudel, Lerner, Ginzburg, Mendelevich, and Shlepak."[81] Miller hoped that with enough awareness, the American Jewish community would be able to help alleviate the plight of Soviet Jewry.

As Miller arrived in Rochester and developed personal relationships with New York congressmen and senators, he used these contacts to further the refusenik cause. Miller brought the issue of the Soviet law against "malicious hooliganism" to the attention of

[78] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 10, 2010.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Letter from Judea Miller to "Colleague," September 10, 1979, MS 686, Box 3, File 14, AJA.

Congressman Barber Conable and Senator Jacob Javits (1904–1986),[82] He described how Jews seeking exit visas were often charged with this crime and, though it was only a misdemeanor, those who had been condemned suffered enormous consequences. In a letter to Congressman Conable, Miller noted that "For most Russians ['malicious hooliganism' was] a petty offense with minor penalties. For Jews it becomes a route to Siberia and the destruction of whole families for years on end."[83] Miller urged the congressman to take a more active role in the matter, and described how Jews all over the Soviet Union were facing unparalleled hardships.

Miller was put in touch with a number of refuseniks and their families. His advocacy for one family in particular, the Lozanskys, helped to demonstrate his commitment to the refusenik cause and his desire to assist individual Jews from the Soviet Union to the best of his ability. Senator Jacob Javits was going to the Soviet Union to meet with officials there, and Miller used this opportunity to ask Javits to advocate for a Russian Jew by the name of Edward Lozansky, who had family in Rochester. Lozansky was married to Tatyana, the daughter of three star Soviet general Ivan Ershov, who served as the director of all civilian defense operations for the USSR.[84] Ershov worked to facilitate Lozansky's emigration, but was against his daughter and granddaughter leaving the USSR with him. Additionally, in compliance with a bureaucratic technicality preventing one member of a married couple from leaving without the other, Lozansky and Tatyana were forced to divorce before he

[82] Letter from Judea Miller to Jacob Javits, July 6, 1978, MS 686, Box 3, File 11, AJA.
[83] Letter from Judea Miller to Barber Conable, July 6, 1978, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[84] Letter from Judea Miller to Harry Lieberman, January 15, 1979, MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.

could leave."[85] Neither Lozansky nor Tatyana considered this divorce valid, and Lozansky sought to do everything possible to reunite with his family in the United States.[86]

Miller shared this information with Senator Javits in the hope that he would be able to sway the Soviet authorities with whom he was meeting. In a letter to Javits, Miller described his concern with the Tatyana and Tanya's inability to leave the USSR. Miller spoke of "desperate actions" that he and others in the Jewish community were willing to take, such as public demonstrations and hunger strikes, which he hoped could be avoided if the senator was indeed able to make progress by quietly advocating for the Lozanskys in his high-level meetings with Soviet officials. Miller wrote, "Your [Javits's] visit to the Soviet Union may place you in a unique position discreetly to bring this tragic case to the attention of the highest Soviet authorities… this family must be allowed to be reunited in the United States."[87] Miller hoped that Javits's meeting with top Soviet officials might result in bringing the Lozanskys together again.

In a reply following his trip, Senator Javits told Miller that he had participated in a meeting with the highest echelons of Russian leadership, and "raised with them what I [Javits] consider to be one of the most important outstanding issues between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., that of the fundamental human right to emigrate.[88] He described how he expressed his "profound and adamant concern over the plight of Soviet Jewry and the desire to emigrate" throughout these meetings and protested "those being cruelly punished for that reason." In addition, Senator Javits compiled a list of other refuseniks during his

[85] Craig Whitney, "Between Divorce and Emigration," *New York Times* (April 26, 1979), MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.
[86] Letter from Edward Lozansky to Jacob Javits, November 6, 1978, MS 686, Box 3, File 11, AJA.
[87] Letter from Judea Miller to Jacob Javits, November 8, 1978, Manuscript Collection 686, Box 3, File 7, AJA.
[88] Letter from Judea Miller to Jacob Javits, January 15, 1979, MS 686, Box 3, File 11, AJA.

visit and sought to ensure their release. Javits assured Miller that, "… on November 15 the Senate Delegation met with Foreign Minister [Andrei]Gromyko (b. 1909, d. 1989) and gave him a list of names of individuals for whom we sought specific relief. This list included the names of Mrs. Lozansky and her daughter."[89] Tatyana and Tanya's request to emigrate, however, was again declined.[90] Though he returned to New York with little success, Senator Javits assured Miller that he would keep him informed of any future meetings he might be having with the Soviets.

Rather than trying to reach out to the top echelon of the Soviet government, Miller sought to raise this case to the highest rung on his own. The following year, Miller contacted Representative Frank Horton with a request to elevate the Lozansky's plight to the highest levels of US authority. This effort also proved to be unsuccessful, as demonstrated by correspondence between Horton and David McGiffert, the Assistant Secretary of Defense and International Security Affairs. McGiffert contended that the State Department was having great difficulty in highlighting any one Soviet name or family in its discussions with Soviet officials. McGiffert pointed out that the Department of State was cognizant of "hundreds of difficult and urgent reunification cases," and how he felt it would be inappropriate for the US government to give priority to any one individual or family. More importantly, McGiffert claimed that the mention of a particular refusenik to the Soviet Ministry of Defense would surely be rebuffed. The Soviet ministry with which his Defense and International Security Affairs department interacted had no jurisdiction over

[89] Letter from Jacob Javits to Judea Miller, December 22, 1978, MS 686, Box 3, File 11, AJA.
[90] Letter from Judea Miller to Jacob Javits, January 15, 1979, MS 686, Box 3, File 11, AJA.

emigration.[91] Miller's attempt to leverage his relationships with his elected representatives proved futile.

Changing tactics, Miller redoubled his efforts to spread awareness about the refuseniks' plight in the Jewish community and beyond. He sent letters to a number of leading academics he met while a rabbi in Malden and Rochester, such as Samuel A. Goldblith (1919–2001)[92], the Vice President for Resource Development for MIT and physicist Robert Marshak (1916–1992)[93] of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute. In these correspondences, Miller asked for their help in rallying the support of other Nobel Prize winners to sign a statement calling for easing of the Soviet Union's emigration policy.[94] He sent detailed information of the Lozansky story to *The New York Times*, which ultimately wrote a piece on their plight.[95] Miller's advocacy for the Lozansky family began to gather momentum.

Soon after, the New York Senate and House of Representatives unanimously adopted a resolution to free the Lozanskys, which was forwarded to President Carter.[96] Two weeks later, twenty one US senators signed a letter to Russian Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin (1919–1910), which stated,

> We are compelled to write in behalf of Mr. Edward Lozansky… and his wife Tatyana and their seven-year-old daughter, who have not been allowed to leave the Soviet Union to join him in this country… While it is certainly

[91] Letter from David McGiffert to Frank Horton, November 30, 1979, MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.
[92] "Goldblith, MIT professor of food science, Bataan March survivor, dies." *MIT News* (January 7, 2002), web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2002/goldblith.html (accessed March 23, 2011). Goldblith gained renown for his research into freeze-drying, and most importantly, microwave technology.
[93] For more information, see "Robert E. Marshak Bio Sketch." Special Collections, University Libraries, Virginia Tech. http://spec.lib.vt.edu/marshk/bio.htm (accessed March 24, 2011).
[94] Letter from Judea Miller to Samuel Goldblith and Robert Marshak, October 25, 1979, MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.
[95] "Soviet Woman Caught in a Trap Between Divorce and Emigration," April 26, 1979, MS 686, Box 4, File 6, AJA.
[96] Senate and House of Representatives Proposal, Adopted by the Senate on May 16, 1979, and by the House on May 21, 1979, MS 686, Box 4, File 8. AJA.

> encouraging to see a substantial increase in the number of Soviets being allowed to leave the country, failure to act on this particular case cannot help but create confusion and doubt your government's willingness to abide by the above-mentioned international standards.[97]

Miller's efforts over the past three decades had helped to raise awareness for the plight of Soviet refuseniks. In the Lozansky case, however, it was Edward, Tatyana, and her father who precipitated the family's reunion. Success came only after Lozansky, who was then in Paris, and Tatyana, still in Moscow, went on a 32 day hunger strike.[98] Their hunger strike drew further attention to their cause. This persuaded Soviet officials to let Tatyana and Tanya leave, though they first demanded that Tatyana's father leave his high-ranking position in the Communist Party. He resigned, and though he lost the vast privileges he enjoyed in his former post, his daughter and granddaughter were able to leave.[99]

Miller was ecstatic. In a letter to Lozansky, Miller wrote, "I can hardly believe this is at last happening! Your wife and daughter are being allowed to leave the Soviet Union to join you in the United States. At last you will be a family again. Your perseverance and love is what brought this about, as well as her courage. I am happy for you."[100] The family arrived in Rochester in December, 1982, and Miller arranged for a special Shabbat service in their honor in which the reunited family all took part. Miller added the *Hallel* and

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[97] Letter from United States Senators Daniel Moynihan, Jacob Javits, James McClure, Birch Bayh, Robert Dole, Charles Percy, John Heinz, David Boren, Abraham Ribicoff, Paul Sarbanes, John Durkin, Dennis DeConcini, Max Baucus, John Danforth, Carl Levin, William Armstrong, Spark Matsunaga, Alan Simpson, Richard Lugar, William Cohen, and Alan Cranstonto Anatoly Dobrynin, May 31, 1979, MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.
[98] "USSR's Lozansky plans hunger strike in Paris," *Times Union* (July 11, 1980), MS 686, Box 4, File 6, AJA.
[99] The fate of Tatyana's father is largely undocumented, though it is certain that his career with the Communist Party ended with Tatyana and Tanya's emigration. Tatyana worked as a lobbyist in Washington DC for six years, upon which the Lozansky family accepted an invitation by Gorbachev to return to Moscow and establish the city's American University. For more information, see http://www.russiablog.org/2009/04/for_the_love_of_tatiana.php and Dena Bunis, "Soviet general resigns so daughter can leave," *Democrat and Chronicle* (September 17, 1982), MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.
[100] Letter from Judea Miller to Edward Lozansky, December 2, 1982, MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.

Shehechiyanu prayers to this momentous occasion. He described the evening as one of the high points of his career.[101]

Soviet Jews and American Congregational Life

Miller was not only concerned with bringing Soviet Jews into the United States, but wanted to provide them with the Jewish resources they needed to associate themselves with the American Jewish community. He understood how much these people lacked in the USSR, and he wanted to find ways to accommodate their needs. Writing on behalf of the Rochester Board of Rabbis, Miller advised his colleagues as to how they could best serve the Jewish needs of Jewish emigrants. He insisted that Soviet Jewish immigrants who wanted to join a congregation in America "should not be judged as strictly as we may do a Jew raised in the United States in the matter of dues and donations." The notion of congregational dues was completely foreign to Jewish life in the USSR, and Miller feared it would deter many Soviet Jews from involving themselves in American Jewish life. He described Soviet Jewish immigrants as "the 'generation of the wilderness.' Hence they still have to be educated toward *tzedakkah* [*sic*] and Jewish responsibility after living more than half a century in a culture that was unsympathetic to religious needs of any kind, particularly Judaism."[102] Miller recognized that American Jewry had a tremendous opportunity to ease the Jewish transition from the USSR to the United States, and he sought to coordinate how to best assist "the JEWISH integration of the new Russian

[101] Memo from Judea Miller to "Harold," December 16, 1982, MS 686, Box 4, File 8, AJA.
[102] Letter from Judea Miller to rabbinical colleagues, September 29, 1979, MS 686, Box 3, File 17, AJA.

immigrants."[103] Miller believed that American Jewry had a tall order. Not only should they help bring Jews from the USSR to the United States, but they should do what they could to ensure that these immigrants would have access to a rich and vibrant Jewish future.

Sanctuary Movement: An Introduction

Prior to 1980, the United States' immigration policy stated that political refugees from Communist countries or the Middle East could be granted emergency asylum into the United States. Immigrants from other countries, however, required the special permission of the Attorney General in order to remain in the country. In 1980, Congress changed the US immigration policy to broaden this definition of refugee as "anyone with a 'well-founded fear of persecution' for reasons of 'race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion." President Carter signed the act on March 17th, 1980.[104] El Salvador had been ravaged for years by civil strife and warfare, though this period would pale in comparison to the violence that was to come. Shortly thereafter Carter's legislation, guerrilla forces in El Salvador murdered Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero (1917–1980), "the nation's most courageous voice for peace," setting off a renewed surge of bloodshed and waves of desperate refugees hoping to escape.[105] Between 1974 and 1996, over 250,000 were killed and over one million displaced by violence.[106] For many, American asylum was their last and only hope.

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[103] Letter from Judea Miller to Rabbis Kilimnick, Hyman, Soltz, and Atkins, October 25, 1979, Box 3, File 17, AJA.
[104] Edwin Guthman, "Underground Railroad, 1980's Style," *New York Times* http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DEFDF113AF936A1575AC0A96E948260&pagewanted=print (accessed January 29, 2011).
[105] Ibid.
[106] , *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1.

Though Congress had broadened the parameters for which political refugees could legally enter the United States, under President Reagan, it categorized most Central American immigration as non-political and economically motivated instead. As a result, many Central Americans who made their way to the United States were deported. Of all the Central American countries, El Salvador had become the most dangerous, with over half a million immigrating to the United States between 1980 and 1986. During this time, 50,000 Salvadorans were held in US custody, often for over a year, only to be sent back to their war-torn country. Meanwhile, between one quarter and one third of Iranians, Eastern Europeans, and Asians seeking asylum were approved.[107] Throughout the 1980s, in contrast, fewer than 5% of Central Americans in America were legally allowed entry.[108]

Public opinion surveys taken throughout this period ranked the immigration of Central American refugees low on America's list of domestic priorities. Despite the issue's lagging popularity, "a small, vocal, and disproportionately influential segment of the population successfully lobbied for a more humanitarian response."[109] Religious organizations took the lead in providing aid and support in what would become known as the "Sanctuary Movement." The Sanctuary Movement was a loosely organized network, comprised primarily of religious institutions that defied the legal system to provide aid and safe passage in and through the United States for Central American refugees. The historian Maria Garcia underscored the prominent role that America's religious institutions played in assisting these refugees. "Advocates who were motivated by religious beliefs were particularly predisposed to challenging laws… during this period," she wrote, "because they

[107] Guthman, "Underground Railroad."
[108] , *Seeking Refuge,* 162.
[109] Ibid. 2.

believed they answered to a higher authority."[110] Miller became an active member in the Sanctuary Movement, and Miller's congregation, Temple Brith Kodesh (TBK) in Rochester, New York became the second Jewish congregation in the United States to formally endorse the movement's objectives.[111]

Miller viewed the United States' immigration policy toward Central Americans in conflict with his core Jewish values. In a letter to Rochester Mayor Thomas Ryan **(**1928–2003), Miller recalled Numbers 25:9–15 and Deuteronomy 19:10 in which the Israelites were commanded to establish six cities to which people may flee if their lives are in jeopardy. Miller wrote, "These cities of refuge were not only for the Israelite. Numbers 35:15 says they were '… for the children of Israel and for the stranger.'"[112] In this same letter, Miller also drew upon Talmudic tradition of protecting the accused until fair judicial proceedings were possible. Miller concluded his letter by highlighting a rabbinic discussion in which a man pursued by another took refuge in a certain city. Unable to find the man, Miller told how the pursuer demanded that the runaway be turned in to him or the city would be destroyed. The rabbi informed the mayor that according to the Talmud, "the decision was that this man, who had not yet been judged guilty, would be protected even at the risk of that city."[113] For Miller, providing sanctuary for Central American immigrants fleeing for their lives was not merely a political or legal debate; it was a Jewish imperative.

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[110] Ibid., 4.
[111] Ivan Roman, "Temple Votes to Join Sanctuary Movement," *Times-Union* (April 24, 1985), MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA. The first congregation to endorse the Sanctuary Movement was Temple Emanu-El of Tucson, Arizona, the city where the movement began. TBK was the second of at least ten congregations to join the movement.
[112] Letter from Judea Miller to Thomas Ryan, April 16, 1986, MS 686, Box 5, File 6, AJA. Thomas P. Ryan, Jr. became the sixty-third mayor of Rochester, New York in 1973.
[113] Letter from Judea Miller to Thomas Ryan, April 16, 1986, MS 686, Box 5, File 6, AJA.

Sanctuary, the Holocaust, and Slavery

For Miller, the plight facing Central American refugees was eerily similar to the Jewish plight during the Holocaust. Miller often referenced the Holocaust in galvanizing support for the Sanctuary Movement among Jews and non-Jews alike. Reflecting his discomfort with American Jewry's tepid response to accounts of genocide during World War II, Miller described how in nearly Oswego County, New York, over one thousand Jews fleeing Nazi Germany were placed in squalid internment camps on American soil. Miller wrote, "Those interned were the lucky ones. Because those many that were returned were usually sent to their deaths."[114] Miller viewed the United States' immigration policy toward these new refugees as a repetition of the same callous response to human tragedy that directly or indirectly spurred the tremendous loss of Jewish life in the Holocaust.

In an undated document titled, "The Ghost of Struma and the Haitians," Miller compared the US's policy of rebuffing Central American immigrants to the callousness with which Turkish officials turned away the Struma. The Struma was a refugee boat, which in December, 1941, carried over 750 Jews Romanian Jews fleeing Palestine. Its engine failed near Istanbul and was towed out to the Black Sea at the order of the Turkish government. The Struma was promptly sunk by a Soviet submarine.[115] Miller described how Jewish refugees journeyed on "pathetic, unseaworthy boats which sometimes made their way to what was hoped to be safe shores. But always they were sent back to sure death at the hands of the Nazis." In turning away desperate Central American refugees, Miller asserted

[114] Judea Miller, "Why We Give Sanctuary," undated, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[115] Franz, Douglas, and Catherine Collins. *Death on the Black Sea* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), xv.

that, like the Ottoman authorities who refused to aid the Jews on the Struma, the United States should be held partially responsible for the deaths of the refugees it turned away.

By describing these "atrocities that were allowed to happen by innocent by-standers," Miller highlighted the callousness of US officials who rejected desperate Haitians trying to reach US shores. Miller was especially agitated over what he saw to be the complacent public that refused to disobey the government and take action themselves. In describing the Central American plight, Miller wrote,

> It was as though God were giving us, as Jews, a challenge, a test. We who were the victims in the past, have we learned from that experience? And what have we learned? Will we now let others be turned away who reach out to us for safety, for sanctuary, for protection? Will our children and grandchildren look back at us with shame? Or will we now be like those [Righteous Gentiles] whose names are recorded along the Way of the Righteous at *Yad Va'Shem* in Jerusalem?[116]

Drawing another historical parallel, Miller linked the Sanctuary Movement to 19th century anti-slavery movement in the United States and his own Civil Rights work in the 1950s and 60s. Sanctuary was often referred to as the "Underground Railroad," which deeply resonated with Miller and his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Miller understood the conflict between an individual's conscience and the nation's legal system, the important role of religious communities, and "the furtive movement of a group of oppressed people to havens of safety"[117] as linking together the 19th century Underground Railroad to the 20th century Sanctuary Movement.

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[116] Judea Miller's Address at Congregational Meeting on Sanctuary, pp. 6–7,April 23, 1985. April 23, 1985, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.

[117] Peter Korn. "Hiding in the Open," *Student Law* no. 14 (1985–1986): 25. http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/studlyr14&div=40&id=&page= (accessed January 29, 2011).

Miller understood the mass flight of Central American immigrants as an effort on the refugees' part to survive. He was therefore infuriated by sentiments suggesting that they had fled their homeland in order to pursue economic opportunity. The Sanctuary Movement, Miller believed, was the opportunity for Americans, particularly American Jews, to do what they could to prevent the darkness of the Holocaust and the stain of slavery from ever reemerging on American soil.

Bringing Sanctuary to TBK

Miller strongly supported the Sanctuary Movement and was instrumental toward making TBK a Sanctuary congregation. In his letter to Rochester Mayor Thomas Ryan, Miller described how his temple was offering its support for families that were escaping from the Soviet Union, Cambodia, Rumania, and Iran. "We were encouraged by agencies of our government to do this," he wrote, and "we do not believe that giving sanctuary to refugees from El Salvador is different."[118] Miller disagreed with his government's classification of who was considered a "political refugee," asserting that the Central American refugees, like those from the USSR, Asia, and the Middle East, would face near-certain death if they were forced to return.

On April 23, 1983, Miller addressed the entire TBK congregation in a conversation on the issue of Sanctuary, trying to garner congregational support for the controversial and illegal movement. Miller reminded the congregation that during the previous year, TBK had showed the movie, *The Boat is Full*, a film about the Swiss government sending back Jewish refugees who had illegally entered the country. Miller wrote, "Had we shown this tonight, I

[118] Letter from Judea Miller to Thomas Ryan, April 16, 1986, MS 686, Box 5, File 6, AJA.

am sure there would have been little to debate."[119] Miller continued by citing the Reform Movement's Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, writing, "We deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the… evils of our present society."[120] The Sanctuary Movement, Miller asserted, was a reflection of Reform Jewish values and should therefore be adopted by the congregation.

Over 200 people showed up to the meeting, and when the issue of becoming a Sanctuary congregation came to the floor, Miller reported that only one person voted against the measure.[121] TBK's "Resolution on Sanctuary" stated:

> THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that 'The congregation of Temple B'rith Kodesh declares itself to be in a covenant of sanctuary for persons who are fleeing from El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti because of fear of persecution or death, thereby lending moral, political, and spiritual support for those congregations already providing that facility… We remember our helpless anguish when European Jews were flushed from hiding some forty years ago… We remember the biblical injunction against standing idly by our neighbor's blood.'[122]

The *Democrat and Chronicle* reported that TBK was the fourth religious institution in Rochester to support the Sanctuary Movement and the first Jewish congregation to do so. Miller explained TBK's controversial decision in an article for the *Times Union*, writing, "We do not judge our government's policy in Central America. Issues are debatable. What is not debatable is that if these refugees were sent back now, their lives would be in jeopardy."[123] TBK had publically flaunted the law and publicly declared itself ready to help Central American refugees in need of sanctuary even if their activities were deemed illegal.

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[119] Judea Miller' Address at Congregational Meeting on Sanctuary, April 23, 1985. April 23, 1985, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Letter from Thomas Fink to David Saperstein, April 30, 1985, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[122] Temple B'rith Kodesh Resolution regarding Sanctuary, April 18, 1985, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[123] Judea Miller, "Sanctuary from death," *Times Union* (July 26, 1985): 5A, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.

Sanctuary and the CCAR

Despite Miller's petitions, however, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) declined to issue a statement on Central American immigration and the Sanctuary Movement. Between 1983 and 1984, Miller was in contact with Rabbi Randall Falk, rabbi of Congregation Ohabai Sholom in Nashville, Tennessee, and a member of the CCAR's Commission on Justice and Peace. In 1981, following the deaths of countless Haitians attempting to sail to Florida, Miller suggested the committee sponsor a resolution on the Central American refugee crisis to put to the vote at the upcoming CCAR conference. To Miller's dismay, the committee suggested that his proposal be given further study. Miller was irate with the Commission's response, writing:

> I understand how the Commission members felt that the Haitian refugee situation is complex. But I do not understand at all how the Commission found nothing at all to say concerning both the deaths off the Florida coast… These are moral issues that do not seem complex at all – just horrendous!

Miller reminded his rabbinical colleagues that European Jews faced similar treatment when they fled the Nazis. In a stinging rejoinder that could not help but offend his colleagues, Miller pointed out that "Prominent church leaders… said the problem of saving Jewish refugees from Germany was also 'complex' and had to be given 'further study…'"[124]

Falk replied to Miller on behalf of the CCAR's Commission on Justice and Peace, explaining the political complexities and legal uncertainties surrounding the Central American immigrants and the Sanctuary Movement, writing that the CCAR was still "trying to determine who are the 'good guys' and who are the 'bad guys.'" It was better, therefore, for the CCAR to gather more information before it issued a controversial and potentially

[124] Letter from Judea Miller to Randall Falk, November 3, 1981, Manuscript Collection 686, Box 2, File 13, AJA.

flawed resolution. Falk wrote, "As Jews, we are especially vulnerable in this whole matter of illegal immigration, and for the moment at least it seems wisest to 'sit this one out."[125]

Yet Miller had no patience for the CCAR's timidity. He told Falk that he was disappointed that the CCAR might not make a statement on the issue. He described how American law had been used to help political refugees from other parts of the world facing similarly life-threatening political circumstances. The CCAR's support of the Sanctuary Movement, Miller asserted, was not a matter of "judging 'good' from 'bad guys,' but in applying American law to people who may be in jeopardy in their home countries, no matter what the political issues."[126] Miller recalled the callousness with which Jewish refugees were "turned back to face death."[127] The CCAR, Miller said, should "not 'sit this one out," as Falk suggested.[128]

In the coming years, the Sanctuary Movement started building momentum in the Jewish community, and rabbis from around the country wrote to Miller asking how they could get their congregations involved.[129] Shortly after Miller's heated correspondence with Falk, the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution supporting the Sanctuary Movement for Central American refugees.[130] The following year, Miller submitted the Rabbinical Assembly's proposal to the CCAR's Commission on Justice and Peace as a model for what the CCAR might adopt as a resolution of its own.

This time, Falk was in agreement with Miller, and he was prepared to join him in supporting a CCAR resolution in support of the Sanctuary Movement. The CCAR's

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[125] Letter from Randall Falk to Judea Miller, December 29, 1983, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[126] Letter from Judea Miller to Randall Falk, January 4, 1984, MS 686, Box 2, File 13, AJA.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Letter from Robert Levy to Judea Miller, May 6, 1986, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[130] Rabbinical Assembly, *Resolution on Central American Refugees*, 1984, MS 686, Box 2, File 13, AJA.

Commission on Justice and Peace, however, was not entirely on board. After a failed attempt to advocate for a resolution, Falk wrote to Miller explaining that the Commission decided that they would like to invite two rabbis on either side of the issue to debate the merits of the Sanctuary Movement at the CCAR convention instead. Falk described how the Commission encountered a strong opposing point of view, which led the body to engage in a "thorough discussion before arriving at some kind of consensus or positive approach to this increasingly difficult situation." [131] Falk commiserated with Miller: "Looks like the CCAR has lost its collective memory."[132] For the largest national body of Jewish leadership to openly defy federal law was a radical step many were unwilling to take. Between this February 5th correspondence and the mid-April CCAR conference, however, Reform rabbinic opinion had swayed such that on April 17th, 1985, the body passed a resolution lending moral and financial support to the Sanctuary Movement.[133]

The Reintroduction of Capital Punishment

Capital punishment in America dates back to the nation's days as an English colony, under which a long list of offenses ranging from theft and counterfeiting to rape and murder were all punishable by death. With over two hundred offenses punishable by death, the 18th century English penal code was widely known as Europe's harshest. America inherited this tradition.[134] The prevalence of capital punishment remained largely unchanged with the independence of the United States and even following the adoption of the federal Bill of Rights, in which the stipulation against "cruel and unusual punishment"

[131] Letter from Randall Falk to Judea Miller, February 5, 1985, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Resolution adopted by the CCAR Commission on Social Action, April 17, 1985, MS 686, Box 5, File 9, AJA.
[134] Stuart Banner, *The Death Penalty: an American Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1–9.

originally referred to forms of torture such as crucifixion and burning at the stake. Five key developments, namely the invention of degrees of murder, ending of public executions, rise in jury discretion, reducing the number of capital statues, and at various points, the outright abolition of the death sentence, all contributed to America's separation from this English legacy.[135] By the mid-20th century, capital punishment had dropped precipitously and was reserved solely for convicted murderers. Come 1968, the very constitutionality of the death penalty came under review.[136]

The judiciary in the latter half of the 20th century began to reexamine the constitutionality of capital punishment. A growing trend, as reflected by scholar legal scholar Augo Bedau, started to question if the state's infliction of capital punishment in any form was tantamount to "cruel and unusual punishment."[137] Coinciding with these legal developments emerged a growing realization that the death penalty in the United States was far from colorblind. A number of studies conducted in the 1960's and 1970's demonstrated how race impacted a judge's possible death sentence and uncovered a disturbing trend: black convicts were many times more likely to face capital punishment as white convicts guilty of a similar crime. A study conducted by Harvard legal scholar Hans Zeisel confirmed this theory. Looking at FBI homicide records, Zeisel found that offenders on death row were thirty one times more likely to face capital punishment if the victim was white as opposed to a person of color. Additionally, forty seven percent of black defendants

[135] Hugo Adam Bedau. *The Death Penalty in America: Current Controversies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1–8.
[136] Ibid., 13.
[137] It had long been held that "crueler" forms of execution, such as the electric chair or firing squad, might conflict with the clause against the "cruel and unusual punishment" clause in the Bill of Rights. This branch of scholarship, however, sought to demonstrate how the extreme form of power the state held over the death row inmate's extreme form of powerlessness was in and of itself tantamount to "cruel and unusual punishment." For more information, see Hugo Adam Bedau, "Background and Developments," in *The death penalty in America: current controversies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). 232–233.

arrested for murdering white victims faced Florida's death row, while only twenty four percent of white defendants convicted of murdering a white victim were similarly sentenced. When both the offender and victim were black, however, only one percent of the perpetrators were sentenced to death.[138]

The 1972 case Furman v. Georgia led to a Supreme Court decision in which these racial discrepancies were explicitly examined. In this particular case, William Furman, an African American, accidentally killed a man while burgling his house. Furman was tried for murder and sentenced to death. This prompted the Supreme Court to more closely examine the national standards under which the death penalty had been imposed. The conclusion reached by five of the nine Supreme Court justices was that the death penalty in the United States had a disturbing history of arbitrary administration, with two of the five justices citing an unmistakable racial bias in the application of the law. The repercussions of these findings were so great that all capital punishment was suspended throughout the country until 1976.[139]

Capital Punishment and Miller's Jewish Values

The racial imbalance of the justice system's application of the death penalty shook Miller deeply. In a letter to the editor of *Democrat and Chronicle*, Miller wrote, "The fact is that nearly all of those selected to die are poor. Half of them are people of color. Some are insane, mentally retarded or juveniles. Mostly they are those whose victims are white. And

[138] Hans Zeisel. "Race Bias in the Administration of the Death Penalty: The Florida Experience." *Harvard Law Review* 95, no. 2 (1981): 460. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1340711 (accessed October 7, 2010).
[139] Ibid., 456–467.

some of them are innocent."[140] Miller perceived not only the racism, but the savagery and finality of capital punishment as vestigial components of an outdated and decidedly non-Jewish legal code. Miller wrote:

> The gallows, the electric chair, the guillotine, the gas chamber, and the firing squad are not only instruments of death. But like the cross for crucifixion in the ancient Roman Empire, they are symbols of terror, cruelty and irreverence for all life. The death penalty is a spiritual link between primitive savagery, medieval fanaticism and modern totalitarianism. It stands for everything that humanity must reject if it is to be worthy of survival.[141]

Miller's discomfort with violence and death made the growing use of capital punishment in the United States a particularly disturbing trend. For Miller, capital punishment was a Jewish issue. Describing the context out of which Jewish wariness toward capital punishment emerged, Miller wrote,

> The Talmud records this discussion, 'The Sanhedrin that puts to death one person in seven years is termed tyrannical. Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah says, 'One person in 70 years.' Rabbi Tarfon and Rabbi Akiba say, 'If we had been in the Sanhedrin, no one would have ever been put to death.' Rabbi Simeon ben Gemaliel says, 'They would have (thereby) increased the shedders of blood in Israel.[142]

For Miller, the most remarkable aspect of this Talmudic debate was the context out of which it emerged and how it reflected his Jewish values. Miller described how rabbinic wariness over the death of another human being contrasted sharply with Roman depravity where people gathered to watch "fellow human beings fight wild beasts to the death or [were] entertained by gladiators killing one another."[143] Part of what differentiated Jewish tradition from what Miller considered to be its barbaric Roman counterpart was Judaism's

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[140] Letter from Judea Miller to the editor of *Democrat and Chronicle*, January 3, 1990, MS 686, Box 2, File 9, AJA.
[141] Letter from Judea Miller to the Committee of Justice and Peace titled *On the Death Penalty*, November 5, 1979, MS 686, Box 2, File 19, AJA.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Judea Miller, "Judaism and the Death Penalty," *America,* 167, no. 8 (September 26, 1992): 183, MS 686, Box 8, File 7, AJA.

commitment to the preservation of human life. For Miller, the debate between Jewish values and non-Jewish culture on state-sanctioned death continued to the present day in the form of American capital punishment.

The Death Penalty in New York

In 1977, Miller became concerned about efforts in New York to reinstate the death penalty. Miller contacted Rabbi Balfour Brickner, then the co-director of the UAHC's National Commission on Social Action and the Director of the UAHC's National Commission on Social Action, to solicit his help in pushing the New York Association of Reform Synagogues and the UAHC to issue a statement reiterating their strong opposition to the death penalty. He also asked Brickner if he could mobilize an interfaith statement against the penalty. Miller was fearful that New York's next legislative session would face a mounting effort to reinstate the death penalty. Although Governor Cuomo might decide to veto the measure, Miller worried that there was a real likelihood that such a veto would be overridden.[144]

Though Miller successfully coordinated an interreligious statement against the death penalty, he was unable to draft a statement that the New York Association of Reform Synagogues would sign. In a 1977 poll, 78% of New York's Jewish community voted for the restoration of the death penalty.[145] In a letter commending Miller for doing "a damn fine job," Brickner lamented how the Reform community of New York had nonetheless become overwhelmingly in favor of reinstituting the death penalty.[146]

[144] Letter from Judea Miller to Balfour Brickner, December 20, 1977, MS 686, Box 1, File 15, AJA.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid.

Death Penalty in Florida

Miller's was concerned not only with capital punishment in New York, but throughout the United States. John Spenkelink (1949–1979)[147] was the first death row inmate slated for execution since 1964. Miller described his frustration with Florida's reinstitution of the death penalty in a letter to Rabbi Lewis Bogage (b. 1935), who was then working at the UAHC Southeast Council's South Florida Federation. Miller told Bogage about a meeting that took place regarding the reinstatement of the death penalty in the US. The rabbi and a team of clergy from across the country had strategized over how to submit an appeal for Spenkelink's clemency and, also, how to organize a vigil if and when he was executed. His efforts to organize these initiatives were intensely challenging. "… It all sounded like an exercise in futility…" Miller wrote Bogage, and "a good part of the reason why these efforts were so blatantly unsuccessful was because so many of the participants were national religious leaders from out of state. It is an old Southern tradition to resent "carpet baggers" of any sort."[148] Having worked for the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, Miller had encountered Southern tradition to foreigners before, and therefore sought to bolster a Florida-based advocacy group to be more effective in addressing this issue.

A number of Floridian rabbis responded to Miller requests, indicating that the issue of capital punishment in Florida was more complicated than Miller suggested. Rabbi Lewis Bogage told Miller the problem was not as much Southern resentment of "carpet baggers" as it was mixed sentiments among the Florida rabbis themselves. Many Florida rabbis,

[147] John Arthur Spenkelink was the first person executed in Florida (and the second one nationwide) after the re-introduction of the death penalty in the United States in 1976.
[148] Letter from Judea Miller to Lewis Bogage, June 27, 1979, MS 686, Box 1, File 12, AJA.

Bogage explained, were actually in favor of the death penalty.[149] Rabbi Frank Sundheim (b. 1932), rabbi of Congregation Shaarai Zedek in Tampa, told Miller how his repulsion toward capital punishment held little leverage with his congregation. Sundheim wrote,

> … The problem is that the people of Florida are pretty much in favor of the death penalty, this includes many people in my Congregation. I gave a sermon last week on it and the vast majority of the comments afterwards was [*sic*] not the type of comments that you and I would like to hear.[150]

Sundheim explained how occasional sermons on the topic were the best a rabbi in such a congregation could do.[151]

Interreligious Efforts

Despite these obstacles, Miller refused to back off his campaign against the death penalty. Toward this end, the rabbi gathered allies against the death penalty in the interfaith community. In the summer of 1979, Miller attended his first meeting of the National Interreligious Task Force Concerning Justice (NIRTFCJ)[152], the religious communities' planning and coordinating group of the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty (NCADP).[153] He lamented how other major religious groups in the United States were widely represented in these meetings, and that he was the only Jew. In a letter to Al Vorspan, Miller insisted that the American Jewish community was "conspicuous by our absence. Either we are still opposed to the death penalty or we are not. If we are, we must continue to devote staff, funds, and representation to these joint efforts… the Jewish

[149] Letter from Lewis Bogage to Judea Miller, July 13, 1979, MS 686, Box 1, File 12, AJA.
[150] Letter from Frank Sundheim to Judea Miller, June 6, 1979, MS 686, Box 6, File 4, AJA.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Miller would joke how "These initials are confusing and a nuisance."
[153] Letter from Judea Miller to Albert Vorspan, June 26, 1979, MS 686, Box 6, File 10, AJA.

religious community must be involved."[154] Though Vorspan agreed, there was little they could do counter the overwhelming sentiment within the Jewish community in favor of reinstating the death penalty.

The Murder of Tanta Yetta

In March of 1978, Judea Miller's great aunt, Yetta Miller, was brutally murdered. A decade later, Miller eulogized her in a *Jewish Advocate* article against the death penalty. In Miller's article, titled, "We Learn a Lesson from the Murder of Tanta Yetta," Miller described his aunt's kindness, caring and compassion, and attachment to her neighborhood, her synagogue, and her community. Her death was a tragedy, and her murderer was never found. He ended the article, however, with a call against the death penalty for her aunt's murderer, if he were ever to be caught:

> The rage we feel, we who knew Tanta Yetta! If we caught him could we not beat him, too, to death? But that is just the point. To kill, to punish with execution, would give vent to the rage I feel. But will it make our cities safer for people like Tanta Yetta? I doubt it. If gentle old people like Tanta Yetta are ever to be safe, we must all somehow learn to cherish life more, as she did. We must learn and teach the preciousness and beauty of human life to a humanity that has forgotten. If we use the atrocity of Tanta Yetta's murder to persuade society again to execute criminals—this would add a second indignity to her murder.[155]

Miller continued his fight against capital punishment until the end of his life, even after public opinion grew increasingly in favor of its reapplication. This particular article on his murdered aunt provoked a flood of responses throughout the Jewish community. A particular exchange with HUC professor Leonard Kravitz (b. 1928) sheds light on the

[154] Ibid.
[155] Judea Miller, "We Learn a Lesson from the Murder of Tanta Yetta," *The Jewish Advocate* (June 2, 1988), MS 686, Box 3, File 7, AJA.

popular Jewish sentiment at the time. "Your commitment to the abolition of capital punishment was touching…" Kravitz wrote Miller, "your hesped for your aunt was a paean in praise of life."[156] He continued, however, by defending capital punishment and the American legal system responsible for its implementation. Kravitz shared Miller's concerns that a disproportionate number of US minorities were subject to the death penalty, though he suggested that a disproportionate number of US minorities were responsible for capital offenses. In his rejoinder to Kravitz, Miller firmly objected to this assertion:

> Having an attorney for a wife, I have watched the legal processes up close. Justicia is not always blind. It is a fact of our court system that convictions and the severity of sentence have more to do with the quality of the legal defense one can afford to purchase than we care to admit. That is why I would not trust a court that is not a proper Sanhedrin to impose the death penalty on anyone. The issues are not always so clear and absolute. But if we have to risk an error, I would prefer to err in favor of life – and therefore I oppose the taking of a life, even by the state.[157]

In the course of his correspondence with Kravitz, Miller described the cascading effect a reintroduction of the death penalty would have on the value of human life. According to Miller, the death penalty would, "[contribute] to the very climate of anger and bloodlust that cheapens the respect for all life in the community. If life is to be cherished, society and the government must help to set an example by NOT allowing the death penalty."[158] Miller believed that the role of the government was not only to protect its citizens, but to set a moral standard for how its citizens should behave. By reinstating the death penalty, Miller contended, the government would fail in these two essential functions.

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[156] Letter from Leonard Kravitz to Judea Miller, April 14, 1980, MS 686, Box 3, File 21, AJA.
[157] Letter from Judea Miller to Leonard Kravitz, January 25, 1980, MS 686, Box 3, File 21, AJA.
[158] Letter from Judea Miller to Leonard Kravitz, February 26, 1980, MS 686, Box 3, File 21, AJA.

Demjanjuk and Capital Punishment

Miller's opposition to capital punishment was consistent when confronting another challenging case, the trial and death penalty of John Demjanjuk (b. 1920), who Miller believed to be the gas chamber operator at Treblinka.[159] On April 18, 1988, Demjanjuk was convicted by the Israeli Supreme Court, and on April 25th, sentenced to death. Miller strongly believed that punishing Demjanjuk would cause tremendous harm. "I opposed the death penalty for [Adolph] Eichmann in 1961," Miller wrote, "just as I do now for Demjanjuk, even if his conviction is upheld by [the Israeli] Supreme Court. In Demjanjuk's case there may still be the possibility, no matter how remote, that he is not really the person accused." Unlike Eichmann's case, where there was no doubt that Eichmann perpetrated his crimes, there was enough of a possibility of mistaken identity that Miller was uncomfortable with Demjanjuk's execution.[160]

Not only did a capital sentence risk executing an innocent man, but Miller asserted that it would trivialize the severity of the crimes he committed in the even they turned out to be true. Miller continued, referring to the murders of his two Polish cousins (brothers) whom he had expected to join his family as a child:

> The murder of six million innocent Jews can never be compensated by the execution now of the murderers. I say this as a person who lost two brothers[161] in the death camp of Majdanek, and my other members of my family and my wife's family in the Holocaust. If there is any meaning that the world may learn from the horror of the Holocaust, -- it is to cherish all the more the lives of all fellow human beings, no matter what their guild or how

[159] John Demjanjuk, originally Ivan Demjanjuk, is presently facing charges for his brutality as a Nazi guard at various concentration camps. Known as "Ivan the Terrible," Demjanjuk was convicted by the Israeli courts and, in 1988, sentenced to death. Demjanjuk's sentence was overturned by the Israeli Supreme Court to allow for the possibility of mistaken identity. Demjanjuk's trial continues to the present day. For more information: http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/lla28&div=38&id=&page=.

[160] Letter from Judea Miller to Lee More, April 19, 1991, MS 686, Box 4, File 14, AJA.

[161] Miller is referring to his two cousins who perished in the Holocaust.

> ghastly their crimes. The climb of humanity out of barbarism is slow and tortuous. Executions even of convicted Nazi war criminals would now only pull all of us back into blood lust, and add yet another indignity to the deaths of those victims.[162]

Capital punishment, Miller believed, said more about the nature of a society than it did about its criminals. The state's reintroduction of the death penalty, Miller asserted, would do little to deter capital offenses while unintentionally normalizing murder. Miller's principled response to the recent loss of his beloved aunt and his childhood loss of two cousins at the hands of Nazis like Demjanjuk underscored his opposition to capital punishment and highlighted what he believed to be the state's role in protecting and sanctifying life. Though his position on capital punishment stood opposite the growing tide of public opinion, Miller continued to speak out against until his passing in 1995.

The Morality of Assisted Suicide

There were limited circumstances, however, under which Miller supported euthanasia, specifically for individuals facing chronic and incurable disease. In 1983, a congregant came to Miller for counseling. She had been diagnosed with Huntington's disease, which he described as "a genetic disease that is incurable and results in inevitable, severe neurological deterioration causing loss of mental and physical facilities" and wanted to take her own life before her condition deteriorated.[163] Miller wrote to Solomon Freehof (1892–1990), then serving as rabbi of Rodef Shalom Congregation in Pittsburgh and a widely regarded scholar of rabbinic literature, and asked if he would render a modern opinion—based on traditional sources—to the congregant's predicament. Rabbi Walter

[162] Letter from Judea Miller to Lee More, April 19, 1991, MS 686, Box 4, File 14, AJA. Page 2.
[163] Letter from Judea Miller to Solomon Freehof, February 22, 1983, MS 686, Box 2, File 15, AJA.

Jacob (b. 1930), the Chairman of the Responsa Committee at the time, replied on behalf of the Committee stating that even in tragic medical circumstances, "euthanasia could not be encouraged. This would be equally true of suicide here… Although we [the Responsa Committee] can emphasize [*sic*] with her wish to commit suicide, it would difficult for us to approve this act as Judaism has and continues to object strongly to suicide."[164] Miller disagreed with their rationale, asserting that his congregant's case deserved unique treatment.[165]

Ultimately, Miller's congregant committed suicide. In a letter to Walter Jacob, six years after his initial question to the Responsa Committee in 1983, Miller writes, "Just to complete the chapter, she [the woman with Huntington's disease] did commit suicide on Friday. I officiated her funeral on Sunday, May 7th. It was a painful situation for all. But as Rabbi Akiva said concerning suicide like those at Masada, 'Leave them in silence, with neither honor nor condemnation.' (Semahot 2/1)"[166]

The Complexity of Religious Leadership

The 1980s were a time of deep personal struggle for Miller. Since arriving at TBK, Miller had become a cross-addicted alcoholic, meaning that Miller struggled not just with alcoholism, but broader substance abuse. Through his work with Israel, Soviet Jewry, the Sanctuary Movement, and a number of other high-profile initiatives, Miller had also become a highly respected religious figure in Rochester and throughout the country. As a

[164] Letter from Walter Jacob to Judea Miller, June 13, 1983, MS 686, Box 3, File 10, AJA.
[165] Letter from Judea Miller to Solomon Freehof, April 26, 1983, MS 686, Box 2, File 15, AJA.
[166] Letter from Judea Miller to Walter Jacob, May 8, 1989, MS 686, Box 3, File 10, AJA.

community leader, Miller viewed his addiction as undercutting the integrity of his social justice work, and as a Jew, Miller felt crushingly alone in his substance abuse.

In 1983, Miller delivered a sermon on the character of Mahatma Gandhi, as played by Ben Kingsley in the Oscar-winning film, "Gandhi." Though an inspiriting leader, Miller showed how Gandhi was human and embodied all the complexities and shortcomings that people face:

> Gandhi was neither saint nor angel. He had human faults. [The film] did not present enough of the other dimensions of Gandhi – dimensions that I believe make him more interesting, more human… But that is really what made Gandhi all the more interesting, complex and understandable. He was human![167]

Though Miller does not make the explicit connection between Gandhi's human failings and his own, his critique of Gandhi's portrayal reflects a time of conflict between Miller's persona as a leader and his own human failings.

Miller's History of Addiction

Addiction ran in Miller's family, and Miller had seen the effects of alcoholism from an early age. Miller's great uncle, Zalman[168] died of alcoholism. Reflecting back on his own addiction, Miller wrote, "I had one great uncle who ruined a career as a talented violinist because he began to show up at concerts too drunk to perform. We all thought it was funny that we had to fish Uncle Zalman out of the bathtub when he drank too much at my brother's bar mitzvah."[169] After he became sober, Miller looked back on his childhood and

[167] Sermon by Judea Miller to TBK, "Arms and the Man: A Jewish View of Gandhi," pp. 5–6 and 13, December 16, 1983, MS 686, Box 6, File 27, AJA.
[168] Zalman is the brother of one of Miller's grandparents, though the relationship, and therefore, last name, is unclear.
[169] Anonymous, "'My name is J, I am a Jewish alcoholic,'" *Jewish Post + Opinion* (October 23, 1991): 10–11. Research indicates that the author is Judea Miller.

saw subtle signs of his own addiction. Writing as "Anonymous" for the *Jewish Post + Opinion*, Miller confessed that . . .

> Even as a child, I remember having problems with alcohol. For Kiddush, my wine glass always had to be overflowing… As a young child, I would pass out at the Passover seder. But this was cute, because I was the 'happy little drunk.' This happened also at a Succah celebration, or Simchat Torah, or Purim. I remember as a child going around drinking the cups that were left by adults at a simcha in shul. Did not everyone do that? [170]

Miller kept this side of his and his family's history quiet for most of his life. As his wife, Anita, later reflected, "I loved him to pieces and he loved me, but he had secrets."[171] Miller likely did not become an addict until his move to Rochester in 1973, and Anita did not know that Miller was an addict until 1985. "I thought something was going on," she later recalled, "but I didn't know what, and I certainly didn't know alcoholism."[172] All she knew was that their liquor bills were high.[173] According to Miller's wife, the rabbi felt alone and deeply ashamed of his addiction. He kept it a secret, even from those closest to him.

Intervention and Recovery

In the spring of 1985, Miller's secret came out. While driving under the influence, Miller hit and nearly killed a pedestrian. This incident marked a low point for Miller, and he wrestled with the consequences of this happening for the rest of his life. Shortly after the accident, a group of Miller's friends and some leaders from TBK came to the rabbi's house and held an intervention. They demanded that Miller address his addiction and begin a recovery program, threatening to fire him from his position if he refused to do so, or if he

[170] Ibid.
[171] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 14, 2010.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.

was unsuccessful in his efforts to recover. In late May, 1985, Miller checked in to Chit-Chat Farms,[174] an addiction rehabilitation center in Wernersville, Pennsylvania.

Though the members of his immediate family visited him at Chit-Chat Farms, little information on Miller's recovery endures. Miller's wife remembered that her husband struggled with rehabilitation. She remembered that for reasons Miller would not disclose to her, he was asked to leave the facility on the 27th day of the 28 day program. Anita was shocked when Miller arrived at the house a day early, and she was dismayed that he had failed to complete the first stage of his treatment program. Anita insisted that Miller was nonetheless determined to overcome his addiction, as he became an active member of several addiction recovery groups. In his first week home from Chit-Chat Farms, Miller attended thirty meetings.[175]

In late June, 1985, having recently returned from Chit-Chat Farms, Miller sent a series of letters to his friends and colleagues addressing the issue of his addiction. Writing to Miller's dear friend, Stanley Chyet, Miller described his struggles with addiction, his denial, and the crushing loneliness he felt wrestling with what had become an all-consuming dependency. In this letter, preserved in full, Miller wrote:

> Dear Stan:
>
> I owe you an apology and an explanation. You are my dearest, closest friend. Yet I could not be open with you last month when I told you that you could not visit at my home, especially when we made plans for you to come. You are always welcome with Anita and with me. We love you and look forward to your visits. But not then.
>
> At the time of your visit, I was away at a rehabilitation center for alcoholics. Yes, I am a cross-addicted alcoholic. That means I am addicted to other drugs as well as alcohol. I have long been an addict. It has been lonely. I felt ashamed and frightened and isolated. I was so sick that I could not ask for help, even from Anita. It has been terrible for both of us. I have grown distant

[174] For more information, see http://www.caron.org/history-3075-2985.html.
[175] Phone interview with Anita Miller, October 14, 2010.

from loved ones, from you, too. But last month it became so painful I could no longer deny it. I had become suicidal.

So I went for a month to Chit Chat, a rehabilitation center in Pennsylvania. Now that I am back I feel more at peace with myself than I have felt in years. Now continued denial is no longer necessary. The denial was part of my disease. I now accept the disease as a fact and will live with it decently. I also am learning to like myself more.

Now you know I did not mean to turn you away as I did. But I had no choice. When we meet I shall explain it to you more.

With much love to you, I am
As ever,
Judea[176]

Miller learned that speaking openly about his addiction, a struggle he had kept a close secret for years, was an essential part of his recovery. It was by telling his story that Miller fully became comfortable with who he was and committed to overcoming his addiction. After corresponding with his immediate family and Chyet, Miller reached out to other close friends in the rabbinate. Fully disclosing this dark part of Miller's story was a long and difficult undertaking, and Miller was selective at first about whom he would tell. After his family and Chyet, Miller felt most comfortable speaking openly about his addiction to another friend and colleague[177] who was at the Chit-Chat Farms the same time as he. His first exposure to other rabbis also fighting addiction was at Chit-Chat Farms, when Miller was informed that this rabbi had been through recovery and was working with his community to foster Jewish addiction support groups. In a letter to Goodman, Miller described how surprised he was that there was such an active Jewish group, and asked that the rabbi involve him in any way he could. Miller also wondered what avenues of institutional support he might find in the Reform Movement. "I felt very much alone in my addiction," Miller wrote Goodman, and "I would appreciate it, therefore, if you would please

[176] Letter from Judea Miller to Stanley Chyet, June 28, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[177] In the interest of privacy, the name of this rabbi has been withheld.

keep in touch with me from time to time… Does the CCAR, UAHC or the Synagogue Council have any committees on alcoholism?"[178] Having felt so isolated throughout his own addiction, Miller advocated that the Reform Movement publically address this issue.

Miller was the first to bring the issue of addiction in the rabbinic community to the attention of the CCAR. With their annual convention approaching, Miller sought to create an ongoing support group of recovering Reform rabbis. As Miller disclosed his addiction, he learned of a number of colleagues who were struggling with addiction themselves. Establishing a supportive group of rabbinic colleagues, Miller believed, would take away the stigma and isolation Miller felt when grappling with his addiction alone. It would also encourage rabbis still in denial to seek out help. In a letter to Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser (1925–1994), the executive vice president of the CCAR, Miller wrote, "Alcoholism is more of a problem in the CCAR than we want to admit. But the major problem is not with the rabbis who are in the AA program and are seeking recovery, but those who have the problem and are still floundering."[179] Exposed to the world of Jewish addiction for the first time, Miller sought to alleviate for others some of the desperation and loneliness he had felt.

Raising Awareness

Miller also reached out to the Rochester community to give voice to those wresting with addiction of their own. Writing an anonymous letter to the editor of the *Democrat and Chronicle*, Miller responded to an article on how an intoxicated youth had struck and killed four pedestrians and nearly killed himself. The rabbi described his DUI's and referenced

[178] Letter from Judea Miller to James Goodman, June 28, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[179] Letter from Judea Miller to Joseph Glaser, October 16, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.

back to his own near-fatal encounter driving under the influence. Miller ended his letter expressing his sympathy for the four pedestrians and the youth who had killed them:

> I read the news reports of those deaths with much unease. I was reminded that I could have done that when I was still drinking. I also felt a particular sadness over the fact that nowhere in the articles was there any mention that the young drunken driver had ever been treated for his obvious alcoholism. Though still very young, he had given signs of his addiction many times. Even when he was in jail, he had tried to make moonshine. When he escaped, he was caught soon afterward drinking gin. He repeatedly displayed the lack of judgment and the compulsions of an addict, of an alcoholic. But nowhere was it mentioned in any of the articles that anyone ever tried to intervene in his alcoholism and get him into treatment. Now four innocent lives have been snuffed out and his life, if he survives the injuries from the crash, may be ruined. Let us take alcoholism more seriously. When untreated, it kills! The good news is that it is treatable.[180]

For Miller, responsibility for this tragedy rested not only on the youth, but on a society and legal system that failed to address a treatable problem. Miller dedicated much of the last years of his life toward bringing the problem of addiction, specifically addiction in the Jewish community, to the fore. As Miller learned from first-hand experience, addiction was a treatable disease.

In 1986, Miller attended a Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons and Significant Others (JACS) retreat. JACS is a Jewish addiction recovery group comprised of Jewish members of AA and AlAnon. At the retreat, members expressed their difficulty in obtaining synagogue space to hold their meetings. In a letter to CCAR colleague and friend Rabbi Murray Rothman (1921–1999), Miller urged him to open his synagogue space to these groups. Miller described how churches had been "universally generous" in opening their doors to such meetings, and how "for some reason, synagogues have seemed to be

[180] Anonymous, "Letter to the Editor," *Democrat and Chronicle* (June 12, 1987). Research indicates the author was Judea Miller.

reticent."[181] Miller asserted that there were more Jews and non-Jews involved in addiction recovery programs than anyone would suspect, and simply allowing groups to meet in the synagogue would be affirming to Jews and non-Jews alike. Miller explained how significant it would be for recovering Jewish addicts to feel that same sense of "love and concern and encouragement" from their own religious communities.[182] The Jewish community could no longer ignore addiction in their midst, Miller asserted, nor should they.

Struggling with his own substance abuse, Miller redirected much of the passion with which he had addressed national and global concerns to reaching out to fellow addicts and recovering addicts in the Jewish community. Miller sought to give voice to this silent constituency and publicize the issue of Jewish addiction so that it might be addressed on a larger, institutional level. According to a commonly held Jewish belief, alcoholism was not Jewish affliction. Many Jews are familiar with the Yiddish assertion: a "*shiker* (a drunk) is a *goy* (a non-Jew)." Folk traditions aside, Miller knew that Jews were not immune to alcohol addiction, and sought to expose the fact that alcoholism was a Jewish problem too.

In a document titled, "My Name is Rabbi Ploni Almoni" Miller (referring to himself anonymously as "Rabbi Ploni Almoni[183] and signing the document as such), wrote, "Every Jew who is alcoholic feels he is the only one. We feel guilt and shame because we think we are alone. Our sense of isolation prevents us from seeking help. Those who love us most are also ashamed, and they try to conceal the problem as well."[184] Support groups, JACS in

[181] Letter from Judea Miller to Murray Rothman, June 4, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[182] Ibid.
[183] The term "Ploni Almoni" in rabbinic literature is used to refer to a person without offering his true name, similar to "John Doe" in American culture.
[184] Rabbi Ploni Almoni, *My Name is Rabbi Ploni Almoni*, unidentified source, no date, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.

particular, played the crucial role of "[breaking] down the insidious denial that afflicts alcoholics who are Jews."[185] Jewish denial of the disease only encouraged its continuation.

Describing the prevalence of drinking in Jewish tradition and the absurd claim that a "*shiker* is a *goy,*" Miller wrote,

> One did not hold back in making a blessing… and if one blessing over wine was good, why not another blessing over whisky? So drinking was for the sake of fulfilling a mitzvah, and yet another, and another. And Yiddishkeit included along with wine, bronfen and mehd[186] and schnapps; and the Sephardic tradition had to be honored with Arak. And what was Passover without Slivovitz[187]? We Jews have a rich variety of alcohol in our culture. "But *shiker*," Miller ironically concluded, "was a *goy*."[188]

Personal Obstacles and Alcoholics Anonymous

Support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) played an essential role in Miller's ongoing sobriety.[189] AA, however, presented Miller with an initial challenge as he wrestled with his addiction. As Miller left Chit-Chat Farms and began finding local support groups, he observed that every meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer. Unsure how to handle this dilemma, Miller wrote two letters, the first submitted as a question to the Chaplaincy Commission of the CCAR's Responsa Committee, and the second missive – related to the first -- was a personal letter to Rabbi Walter Jacob, the head of the Responsa Committee and Miller's personal friend.

In his general letter to the members of the Responsa Committee, Miller wrote about the case of a Jewish veteran who was a recovering alcoholic. This veteran was an active

[185] Ibid.
[186] Bronfen and mehd translate to whiskey and mead.
[187] An Eastern European version of plum brandy.
[188] "'My name is J, I am a Jewish alcoholic,'" 10–11.
[189] Anonymous, "Letter to the Editor," *Democrat and Chronicle* (12 June, 1987).

member of AA, "an organization that is essential for his continued sobriety." [190] He proceeded to inform the members of the Responsa Committee that each AA meeting ended with attendees reciting the Lord's Prayer, a ritual that the veteran found surprisingly comforting and reassuring in that context. Miller went on to explain that the veteran was aware of the Christian overtones of the prayer and its origins in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The veteran was also cognizant of the Christian prayer's stylistic similarities to the Kaddish. Was it permissible for the Jewish veteran to recite this prayer at the AA meetings?[191]

In his private correspondence to Rabbi Jacob, however, Miller divulged the real impetus behind his question. Miller wrote, "I recently learned that I am a cross-addicted alcoholic. I find that active participation in Alcoholics Anonymous is essential for my continued sobriety."[192] For Miller, his dilemma with saying the Lord's Prayer in AA meetings was twofold. First, was it permissible for a Jew to recite a Christian prayer at the end of the AA meeting? Second, what were the implications of a rabbi doing so, particularly when other Jews in the group "might be led astray?" [193] Miller's letters to the Responsa Committee and to Jacobs reflect Miller's initial struggle between his private needs as an addict and the very public nature of his life and career.

Jacob took liberty with Miller's questions and posed them to the Responsa Committee in a way that would be the most helpful to his colleague and friend:

> A rabbi who has joined Alcoholics Anonymous discovered that the meetings concluded with the recitation of the 'Lord's Prayer." He personally does not

[190] Judea Miller to the Responsa Committee, June 28, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Letter from Judea Miller to Walter Jacob, June 28, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[193] Ibid.

> feel uncomfortable with that prayer, but wonders whether it is appropriate for him as a rabbi to participate in the recital of that prayer.[194]

The responsum Miller received was not what he had initially hoped for. The responsum asserted that, because the Lord's Prayer had such strong Christian overtones and was associated exclusively with the divinity of Jesus, "It would, therefore, be wrong for Jews to recite it even in a non-religious setting like Alcoholics Anonymous."[195] Though the Lord's Prayer proved a source of comfort and sometimes awkwardness, the CCAR's Responsa Committee advised against its being recited by Jews at AA meetings.

Looking back on his letters to the Responsa Committee over a year later, Miller understood on a deeper level why he asked about the Lord's Prayer in this early stage of his recovery. Writing in 1987 as "Ploni Almoni," Miller described the strangeness he felt meeting in churches and holding hands at the end of each meeting to recite the Lord's Prayer. Miller wrote, "I just knew I did not belong there. But I was wrong."[196] With those dark months now in perspective, Miller wrote how he had become comfortable with AA and even found the recitation of the Lord's Prayer helpful for his recovery. Looking back, Miller said that the questions he asked were a reflection of a lingering denial of his addiction and a resistance to the difficult process of recovery. Miller was not as interested in the Responsa Committee's answer as he was in finding an excuse not to attend AA meetings. Miller wrote that, since then, "My personal experience… in the AA's Twelve-Step Program is to enter fully and without intellectual reservations. Hence, I say the Lord's Prayer and I am comfortable doing so… I will not place now any obstacles in the way of my

[194] Walter Jacob, *Responsa on the Lord's Prayer*, July, 1985, MS 686, Box 1, File 3, AJA.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Peloni Almoni, "Lord's Prayer at AA Meetings," *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Fall, 1987): 79–81.

full participation."[197] Though it was not their intention, Miller cautioned that the Responsa Committee had given Miller an excuse to cease treatment, one that might be dangerous for other Jewish addicts. Miller wrote, "This responsum may have been based on sound halachic scholarship. But I hope that the Responsa Committee will reconsider it in the light of what may be more helpful to the recovering alcoholic who is Jewish."[198] Miller urged Jews struggling with addiction to suspend any criticism and fully embrace their support groups, despite any Christian overtones the groups carry with them.

The Complexity of Religious Leadership, Revisited

Even great heroes like Mahatma Gandhi, Miller believed, are flawed and complex people. What makes a person great, he said, was when a person could overcome his or her demons. This was what made Martin Luther King Jr. great in Miller eyes. In a sermon on Martin Luther King Jr., Miller wrote,

> In the Hebrew Bible… every great Hebrew leader and teacher had human faults and weaknesses. That's what makes an Old Testament hero different from heroes of other religious traditions. Not one of them was an angel or a superman. When an angel acts angelically there is no wonder. An angel cannot help but act angelically. But when a human being, like you or me, like a Moses or David, or a Martin Luther King Jr. – with all the weaknesses of a human being, and the fears and the temptations of flesh and blood still is somehow able, - if just for a few moments in history, or in a lifetime to rise above those weaknesses and somehow accomplish God's work – that is high drama, that is a real miracle."[199]

[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Sermon by Judea Miller to the Mt. Olive Baptist Church, "And Moses Stuttered," p. 8, January 24, 1993, MS 686, Box 6, File 23, AJA.

Reconsidered Priorities

As Miller worked through his addiction, he reconsidered his family life and the toll his work took upon it. In a speech in acceptance of an award from the Anti Defamation League (ADL), Miller reflected back on his years of activism and the times he put himself and his family in danger. Miller wrote, "I want to thank my *Ezer Kenegdo*, as the Bible would express it, my 'help mate,' Anita. Without her continued love and support and encouragement, I could never have accomplished anything significant over the years." [200] Miller described the terror of the late-night death threats, the hate mail, the brick that was thrown through their living room window, and the other frightening moments Miller and his family faced because of the work he did.[201] Miller apologized for the nonchalant way he told Anita before going to Hattiesburg that "if I did not telephone each night by six o'clock, she should contact the FBI."[202] Miller reflected on his son Jonathan, also a Reform rabbi, who was debating at the time whether or not to help in war-torn Bosnia. Miller wrote,

> I reminded him that he had young children who needed him, and a wife left behind along in a distant community. Only then did I begin to realize what I had done to my own dear wife. For this I now apologize, belatedly, and I advise my activist son not to go to such dangerous places. I guess, as say in Yiddish, *Die Raidel Dreight-sich,* 'what goes around, comes around.'[203]

Having overcome his addiction, Miller looked back on his life with a different perspective than he had before. Miller's values and priorities had shifted from the brash and daring years of his early rabbinate as he acknowledged and apologized for the toll his career exacted on his family.

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[200] Judea Miller Response at ADL Testimonial, p. 2, May 9, 1994, MS 686, Box 6, File 24, AJA.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.

In a baccalaureate address to Bucknell University in 1991, Miller explained his definition of a successful life, and in so doing, reflected on the varied success of his own. The questions a person should be asking are "By what principles does [a person] live? Is he or she a person of integrity? How did he or she make [his or her money]? What sort of husband is he, or mother is she? What kind of parent?"[204] Reflecting back on his years as a social activist, Miller wrote, "Unless these questions are answered favorably, our paragon of success may be a dismal and tragic failure."[205] A "successful" life, Miller asserted, was more than the job one has or the work one does. It is measured by the love and care people show to those who love and care for them. Miller wrote:

> This is a challenge we all face, because few of us will see all our dreams come true. We will be left with shards and fragments of the dreams of our youth. So we will have somehow to learn that our self-worth does not depend on something external, -- like the job we have been able to land, or the suburb we can afford or the car we drive, or even the attractive spouse we display. Our self-worth depends on who we are – our values, our integrity – the love we are able to give and to accept.[206]

Conclusion

"Until Alcoholics Anonymous, Judea was grandiose," Anita reflected.[207] Miller's passion for social justice abroad and at home led him to the front lines of Israel advocacy

[204] Judea Miller, "Address at Baccalaureate Service," p. 6, Bucknell University, June 2, 1991, MS 686, Box 7, File 2, AJA.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Phone interview with Anita Miller, March 24, 2011.

work, the Soviet Jewry Movement, the fight against capital punishment, and the Sanctuary Movement. In every cause that exciting him, Miller fought to serve on the front line. In his Israel advocacy work, Miller fostered relationships with congressmen and senators to help ensure Israel's safety against its neighbors and met with PLO leaders in the West Bank. Miller met with refuseniks in Soviet Russia and was instrumental in orchestrating Edward Lozansky's reunion with his family held against their will in the USSR. With the threat of arrest looming, Miller established Temple Brith Kodesh as the second Jewish synagogue in the country to openly support the nascent Sanctuary Movement, which provided safe passage for millions of Central American refugees fleeing violence in their home countries. It was Miller's substance abuse and recovery, however, which helped to ground the last decade of his life. Anita reflected:

> Embracing Alcoholics Anonymous changed [Miller's] inner being to become more responsible, more rooted, and more grounded… After embracing AA, [Miller] wasn't looking for the thrill anymore. His life was a thrill. His family was a thrill. What he did with his congregation was a thrill. He no longer had to get outside excitement. He was a changed person.[208]

[208] Ibid.

Conclusions and Final Analyses

Miller passed away on Sunday, July 9th, 1995 at the age of 64. Though he remained sober for the last ten years of his life, Miller's alcoholism took a significant toll on his health. Miller died of congestive heart failure at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital in the presence of Anita and his daughter, Rebecca. The funeral was held the following Tuesday at Mt. Hebron Cemetery in Yonkers, New York, where Anita's maternal family is buried. That Thursday, TBK held a memorial service attended by over 3,000 family, friends, and community members. In an emotional service, Miller's son, Jonathan, his lifelong friend, Stanley Chyet—both rabbis—and Father Tom Hoctor (1931–2011)[1], who Miller knew through Alcoholics Anonymous, shared their thoughts with the congregation.[2]

In a memorial tribute to Miller written for the Central Conference of American Rabbis the following year, lifelong friend Stanley Chyet wrote, "It's as if Judea had emerged from the womb compassionate, humorous, serious, inquisitive, intuitive, [and] determined to see justice done . . ."[3] In Chyet's opinion, Miller's complex private life compelled him to "mount a struggle against what troubled him in his own psyche . . . with as much courage and grace as he could muster."[4]

This study, considered in its totality, underscores the accuracy of Chyet's assertion. Miller's career is instructive because (a) it is a case study of an American Jewish religious leader's career during the last half of the 20th century; and (b) it provides us with an interesting perspective on the interrelationship of an individual rabbi's personal struggles

[1] For more information, see, http://www.georgiabulletin.org/local/2011/03/31/fatherhoctordies.
[2] Phone interview with Anita Miller, March 28, 2011.
[3] *CCAR Yearbook* (1996): 375.
[4] Ibid.

influence the direction of his professional endeavors. Judea Miller was a man of many passions which were born in his childhood and intensified during his formative years. Miller's upbringing, especially his father's socialistic leanings, instilled him with a passion to speak out against injustice and stand up in defense of the downtrodden throughout the year. The loss of Miller's cousins in the Holocaust, combined with Miller's involvement in Zionist youth group, lasted with the rabbi for the rest of his life. Ultimately, those passions culminated in an addictive trauma. Miller's response to this personal crisis is informative as it provides us with a rare look at a rabbi's public struggle to recover from drug and alcohol addiction.

Miller's rabbinate constitutes an informative exploration of the American Reform rabbinate in the 20th century. First and foremost, Miller's career demonstrates the importance of social action as the mainstay of the Reform rabbinate in Miller's generation. Like many Reform rabbis of his generation, Miller dedicated his career to the prophetic message of Reform Judaism and rallied his communities to advocate for progressive causes and social change. Second, Miller's rabbinate spanned years of tremendous turmoil and social change in America, and liberal religious leaders like Miller saw themselves on the cutting edge of progress. Thirdly, Miller's rabbinate provides deeper insight into the contours of the Reform rabbinate in North America. As a biographical analysis, it seeks to outline the progress of a typical rabbinic career during this era. We learn how Miller became interested in the Reform rabbinate, and gain insight into the nature of his rabbinic education at Hebrew Union College in New York and Cincinnati. After his ordination, Miller advanced from an army chaplain in Ft. Riley, Kansas, to serving as a community rabbi in one of the largest and most active congregations in the country. Lastly, Miller's life helps

shed light on the personal challenges that can come from spending one's career in the public eye. Perhaps more importantly, Miller's public struggle with addiction serves as an instructive model for how a rabbinic leader struggled mightily to overcome his setbacks and rebuild his public life. Instead of retreating into a private world of rehabilitation, Miller intentionally exposed himself a public process of healing. In doing so, he voluntarily offered himself up as a model for colleagues who suffered silently with their own personal challenges.

In sum, this detailed examination of the life and career of Rabbi Judah B. Miller attempts to contribute an original, comprehensive, and critical study on the evolving American Reform rabbinate during the last half of the 20th century as seen through the lens of one of its most colorful and influential leaders.

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