



*A Celebration of
Rabbi Mordecai Miller's
Jubilee Year*

JUNE 23, 2024
CONGREGATION BETH AMI

Program

Classical Concert

Presentations and Announcements

Mocktail and Cocktail time

Dinner

Tributes and Gifts

Dessert

Closing Words

Concert

Overture to The Magic Flute, KV 620

W.A. Mozart (1756–1791)

Arr. by Joachim Linckelmann

Emily Reynolds, *flute*

Aidan Williams, *oboe*

Mordecai Miller, *clarinet*

Ruth Wilson, *horn*

Steven Peterson, *bassoon*

The Fertile Land

Brian S. Wilson (b. 1962)

Roy Zajac and Mordecai Miller, *clarinets*

Nancy Hayashibara, *piano*

Quintet in E-flat for Piano and Winds, KV 452

W.A. Mozart (1756–1791)

Nancy Hayashibara, *piano*

Margaret Herlehy, *oboe*

Mordecai Miller, *clarinet*

Ruth Wilson, *horn*

Steven Peterson, *bassoon*

Rabbi Miller's Journey *(so far)*

Mordecai Miller was born in Greenwich, Connecticut to Rabbi Meyer and Shulamith Miller in 1949. He is the youngest of three. His much older sisters are named Deborah Elkan (z'l), and Edna Bonacich who resides in Los Angeles. As a toddler, Mordecai moved with his family to Durban, South Africa where his dad helped establish Temple David, now called Beit David.

As a PK (Preacher's kid) he learned to get along without a large group of friends. He attended public school and enjoyed classical music. His mother Shulamith was born in Jerusalem during Ottoman rule and grew up during the British Mandate. She trained at Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem in fine arts. English was her second language and she taught Mordecai many proverbs in Hebrew, Yiddish and even French, which he still remembers and shares. He learned Hebrew at an early age not just with his mother but from her family while visiting them in Israel during the early 1950's.

As Mordecai got older, he spent a lot of time with his father. He would spend summers in his father's office and learned to read Scripture in both Hebrew and English by himself. As a teen he began the discipline of Torah exploration on his own. This practice taught him how to focus, research and gave him inner strength and confidence.

It also gave him a great foundation when he entered Rabbinical school after graduating from the University of Natal in South Africa. He originally wanted to be a mathematician but chose the rabbinate when he came to the realization he could better serve as a rabbi and scholar of Jewish studies. He went to Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. Though raised in a reform home, his father's family had been Orthodox. Many parts of that tradition, he found while training to be a rabbi, resonated with him, particularly the practice of prayer. He had been given an assignment from a rabbinic teacher

to attend Orthodox morning services where he fell in love with its form and content. And he learned how to lead traditional services.

After he was ordained, the challenge was how to fit his Traditional prayer practice with his Reform upbringing. As it happened, he found a position at Temple of Aaron in Minnesota, a Conservative synagogue in need of a junior rabbi. He spent seven years there and learned to be a pulpit rabbi rather than an academician. He found serving others answered many of his questions about life. By helping others in need; whether for simchas, or in sorrow, or other critical times, being a synagogue rabbi has been his calling for the last fifty years.

Rabbi Miller has served two other congregations: Shaaray Torah Synagogue, Canton, Ohio and Brith Sholom Kneseth Israel, St. Louis, Missouri, before coming to California to become the rabbi at Congregation Beth Ami. His experience here, in his own words, has brought him more in balance between a conservative and liberal approach to thinking. And his years in Sonoma county has strengthened his appreciation and love of nature.

His love of music has been shared with CBA at many simchas via his clarinet. He has actively participated in our annual Purim Spiels, our pre pandemic High holiday choir and has played semi-professionally with the Golden Gate Symphony in San Francisco. He often bakes for our shul delicious bundt cakes and double-sized challahs served at Shabbat lunch. Rabbi Miller also has developed a love of photography and shares his beautiful garden with us on Facebook and in class.

For the last fifty-one years, Rabbi Miller has been married to Susan. In his words, his greatest teacher, champion, and finest role model on learning how to treat others with sensitivity and acceptance. Together they have raised two children. Their oldest Sarah is “Morat Derech” at Congregation Kol Emeth in Palo Alto and their son Micah, also a Rabbi, works for the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles as the Assistant Director of Israel Education. The Millers have two grandchildren Miles and Aria. They now reside in Redwood City amongst the floral abundance of Northern California.

Our journey with Rabbi Miller and our thanks

Before Passover in 2012 under the direction of Dr. Arnold Drake, the board knew we had found a rabbi the congregation could learn from and grow with. I had the privilege of calling Rabbi Miller to offer the position and with a warm heart, he and his family came to Northern California. Because of his love of Judaism, willingness to learn our version of California conservative traditions, and his “meet you where you are” teachings, many of us learned to appreciate the nuances of ritual, and traditions, and Torah while living in our modern society.

Dear Rabbi, your journey with us has not been an easy one. Between fires, a Pandemic, technological changes, economic booms and bust, the expansion of Jewish offerings in the county and the needs of our culturally diverse community, you have led the way with kindness, understanding and joy. You even taught Hebrew school prior to the Pandemic to preteens (not an easy crowd) and gained their respect. And your adult class offerings of Bible and Midrash have deepened not only our congregation’s understanding but those in the local and on-line community. Your willingness to lend a hand in the kitchen, move a table, deliver a book, and being called at all hours of the day and night even being “part-time” goes beyond our expectations of a rabbi especially one as experienced as you. You have shown us you are not just a great rabbi but a caring human being.

With all the tasks a pulpit rabbi has to do, you have served us with exceptional patience. So many times especially in the last six months, I hear one of your catch phrase in my head, “circumstances alter cases”, a reminder that life is not just the dark and light. You have shared teachings to look within the gray, to offer a balanced approach to many of life’s challenges and to appreciate life’s blessings and the presence of HaShem. In this age of divisiveness, cancel culture and greater intolerance, you still show the deepest respect and love for all people even when it is not recip-

roated. Without a doubt, I can say you have been a role model of integrity for my family and others.

A rabbi has a lifelong commitment. And though your time as our pulpit rabbi, our Mara D'Atra, is ending, you will hold a special place in each of our hearts and memories. I know as you leave us to be closer to where you live that community will gain so much from your love and commitment to Judaism.

In honor of your time with us, the Board of Directors have established the Miller Music Fund to educate and entertainment our congregation with the gift of Music.

With blessings of good health and a long life of contentment to you and yours,

Barbara Brust McGee

Congregation Beth Ami President, 2021 - 2024



June 23, 2024 / 17 Sivan 5784

Rabbi Mordecai Miller
Congregation Beth Ami
4676 Mayette Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95405-7332

Dear Rabbi Miller:

On behalf of USCJ, we want to wish you a hearty *Mazal Tov* on the celebration of your 50 years in the rabbinate and of your years of service to Congregation Beth Ami, the local Santa Rosa Jewish Community, and the global Conservative/Masorti movement.

Throughout your long and distinguished career as a rabbi, you have been a champion of meaningful Jewish life and your commitment to *Klal Yisrael* has fostered communities that have benefited members and visitors alike. We know that your efforts will continue to be impactful as well.

We recognize and applaud your dedication over so many years to teach and spread Torah, and to embrace a responsibility to serve and support your congregations and your colleagues in a manner consistent with the principles of an authentic and dynamic Judaism.

May you continue to go *mihayil l'hayil* - from strength to strength.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacob Blumenthal".

Rabbi Jacob Blumenthal
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Schaer".

Andy Schaer
International President

*Wishing you the best in your
retirement.*

*Thank you for all that
you did for us. Arnold and
I appreciated your warm
approach, your love for
Judaism, and your sincerity.
My family has so many happy
memories of time spent with
you at shul. We will miss you!*

*Warmly,
Mieneke Drake.*

THE JCC OF SONOMA COUNTY
JOINS IN CELEBRATING RABBI
MILLER'S JUBILEE MILESTONE
AND THANKS HIM FOR HIS
YEARS OF DEVOTED SERVICE
TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN
SONOMA COUNTY.

Thank you for the warmth, humor,
humility and spiritual guidance
you've provided to our family.
Your friendship with Maury (Dad,
Grandpa) was a source of great
happiness and joy.

*Ross Jones, Jane Paul,
Benjamin, Marisa and Nathan*

DEAR RABBI
MILLER:
AVE ET VALE
TEMPORA
MUTANTUR, ET
NOS MUTAMURE
IN ILLIS.
BEST WISHES
FOR YOUR
RETIREMENT,
IVAN BARTA

In the twelve
years that Rabbi
Miller has been
with Congregation
Beth Ami, he has
provided spiritual
guidance for our
community. He is
a caring and moral
person. We wish
him the best.

*Judy Stern &
Mel Decker*

Mordecai, you
will always be
in our hearts, for
all the help you
gave to
Cyndi & me.

*-David &
Cyndi Kahn*

**For all of these
years with you
and your gifts; of
teaching, praying,
and words; your
love shines
through!
Thank you,
Janet & Jeffrey
Stein-Larson**

Thanks to you,
Mordecai, a dear
friend who has
devoted his life to his
family, his friends,
and his communities.
We will miss you.



*Terry & Russ
Gurevitch*

MAZEL TOV to
Rabbi Miller on
your Jubilee
Year! In
appreciation
for all of your
contributions to
CBA.

-Nancy & Ed
Sherman
& family

Welcome to
your new job of
retirement
May it be filled with
the joys of family,
friends, well deserved
leisure and many
opportunities for
study. It has been an
honor having you as
my Rabbi..

Jerry Newman

We are
delighted
to celebrate
your Diamond
Jubilee!

- Phil Weil &
Bonnie Boren

WE ARE HAPPY
TO CONTRIBUTE
TO THE
CONTINUATION
OF YOUR
MUSICAL
LEGACY. WITH
APPRECIATION,

*Richard Kahn
& Anne Brown*

*We congratulate
Rabbi Miller on
12 years of exceptional
service to the community.*

*Thank you for your
wisdom and your
Lev Tov. You leave
a legacy of caring and
Yiddishkeit. You will
certainly be missed!*

*Rabbi George
& The Board of Directors
of Shomrei Torah*

Dear Rabbi Miller
and the Miller
family,
Thank you for the
years of teaching,
friendship and
support you have
given to our family
and the community.
Kol HaKavod,
The McGees

*To Rabbi
Mordecai Miller:
The kindest, most
dedicated Rabbi
we've known.
Mazel Tov on your
Jubilee -
Carol & Mark
Rosen*

We love you
and your
whole family!
We are in such
admiration for
what you have
done for so
many.

*Roy Zajac
& Roger Farley*

Rabbi Miller, you
are a source of not
only knowledge
but also kindness,
patience and
appreciation.

*Leanne Schy
Mark Stoelting
Ethel Schy
Stuart Schy
Ilana Stoelting
SJ Stoelting*

Tribute and Appreciation from

Evelyn Gurevitch

Elizabeth & Dan Weiss

John Creager & Jennie Hartman

Golda Burke

Harlan Radinsky

Judy and David Brunstein

Peggy LaPlante

Tish Levee

Lee Mehlman

Myrna Morse

Carolyn Orlik

Acknowledgements

JUBILEE COMMITTEE:

Barbara McGee
Mark Rosen
Myrna Morse
Myra Thomas
David Kahn
Susan Miller
Judy Stern
Mark Dierkhising

VOLUNTEERS:

Publicity, Tribute and Program Books: Leanne Schy
Center pieces and placemats: Susan Miller and Sarah Miller
Administration: Elizabeth Jarlsberg
Biography, Interview and writeup: Barbara McGee
Food and Kitchen Logistics: Mark Dierkhising
Anna Equil and Jared McGee

PRESENTERS:

Lee Feinstein, Dave Ballo, Barbara McGee,
Bonnie Boren and Phil Weil

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023 - 2024:

Barbara McGee, President
Betty Boyd, Treasurer
Patti Gregg, Secretary
David Ballo, VP of Facilities
Richard Kahn, VP of Membership
Myrna Morse, VP Administration
David Kahn, VP of Fundraising
Myra Stern-Thomas
Bob Cooper
Leanne Schy

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

Andrea Nett, Jose Espinosa, The Friedman Center



4676 Mayette Ave. Santa Rosa, CA 95405
707-360-3000 BethAmiSR.org