

## Stuart S. Miller

Stuart S. Miller is Professor of Hebrew, History, and Judaic Studies at the University of Connecticut (“UConn”) at Storrs. He is also the Chair of the Hebrew and Judaic Studies section in the Department of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages and serves as the Academic Director of UConn’s Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life.

Professor Miller earned his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies and History at New York University in 1980, “with distinction.” Before coming to UConn in 1982, he was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame. He has since been a visiting professor at New York University, the Hebrew University, and Brown University.

Professor Miller specializes in the history and literature of the Jews in Talmudic period Israel. He has written extensively about the ancient city of Sepphoris (Hebrew, *Tsippori*) and served as Talmudic historian to the Sepphoris Regional Project, a major excavation sponsored by Duke University. Between 1988 and 2000 Professor Miller frequently brought a contingent of UConn students with him to participate in the excavations. In addition to his undergraduate and graduate classes at UConn devoted to the Israelites and Jews in the ancient world, he regularly teaches a popular introductory course, “Literature and Civilization of the Jewish People,” and a course on the Bible that covers both Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*) and the New Testament.

Professor Miller has published three books. His first, *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris*, appeared in 1984. He has since published many other articles in scholarly journals on Sepphoris as well as on rabbinic Judaism, Judaism and early Christianity, and Talmudic literature. Miller’s interest in the ancient rabbis led to his 2006 book, *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique Erez Israel, A Philological Inquiry into Local Traditions in Talmud Yerushalmi*. This book is a major reconstruction of the origins of the rabbinic movement with an emphasis on how the ancient sages related to the society in which they lived and how they succeeded in promoting their ideas, which have defined Judaism ever since.

Miller’s most recent book, *At the Intersection of Texts and Material Finds: Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and Ritual Purity among the Jews of Roman Galilee* appeared in June, 2015. This volume combines his interest in understanding archaeological finds in light of the close reading of rabbinic writings. It focuses on purity practices and includes lengthy discussions of the theological perception of water in antiquity as a divine gift and of the relationship of Christian baptismal rites to Jewish ritual immersion.

Professor Miller has recently turned his attention to “modern” Jewish history, specifically the history of Connecticut’s earliest, “Hebrew” farming communities. In Summer, 2012 he co-directed along with CT State Archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni, an

exciting excavation of a *mikveh* (“ritual bath”) in Chesterfield, CT, which belonged to the oldest Jewish farming community in the state, the “New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society” who established their community in the early 1890’s.

Professor Miller has a forthcoming article in *Tradition* on the origins of reciting “Sheva Berakhot” during the week following a wedding and is planning to publish other studies that are aimed at a broader audience, including, one devoted to “Re-Harvesting the Festivals: the Causes and Consequences of the Historicization of Jewish Spiritual Memory,” a topic upon which he has frequently spoken in the Jewish community. Another, more long-range project, stems from his avocation as a classical guitarist and is tentatively titled, “Music Sensibility in Rabbinic Writings.”

Professor Miller has received many academic awards and honors and has been elected to the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences. Miller was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant and a Provost’s Research Fellowship Leave at UConn to pursue his Sepphoris related research. He has spent four academic sabbaticals (1988, 1995-96, 2003, and 2011) in Jerusalem. In 1995-96 he was the Lady Davis Professor in Jewish History at the Hebrew University where he taught a graduate course on the “Jews and their Cities in Roman Period *Erets Yisrael*.” He has spoken at major academic conferences in Israel and was also a co-organizer of an international conference on Ancient Galilee which convened at Hanaton, Israel in 1989.

Professor Miller was raised in Newark, New Jersey and attended Jewish day schools in Newark and Elizabeth. He has resided in West Hartford since 1982, where he and his wife Laura, a physical therapist, raised their three daughters and have been involved in numerous Jewish community activities and institutions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aside from his frequent scholar in residence gigs and presentation of *shiurim*, Miller’s most noteworthy communal activities include: long stints as head of both the Judaic Studies Boards of the Bess and Paul Sigel Hebrew Academy and the Hebrew High School of New England (“HHNE”); Re-Building Chair of the Young Israel of West Hartford (“YIWH”); Vice President, long-time board member, 3X head and special consultant of/to YIWH rabbinic search committees, Consultant on Jewish matters to Charter Oak Temple/Cultural Center (early 1980’s), member of college student advisor committees of the Jewish Federation; and, a past academic advisor and Board Member, Hillel at Storrs, where he initiated and worked with the former Hillel Director to bring the kosher eating facility to UConn. He was active in the Soviet Jewry movement, having travelled with his wife Laura to visit dissidents in Moscow and the Ukraine soon after they were married in the 1970’s. He has also worked with Laura, who most recently has served as president of the YIWH, on many communal projects. All three of their daughters, Aviva, Rena, and Tova, are graduates of the Bess and Paul Sigel Hebrew Academy and HHNE.