

North Fork Reform Synagogue

Gazette

Member of the Union for Reform Judaism

May-June 2019

Nisan-Iyyar-Sivan 5779

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www.northforkreformsynagogue.org

On the Calendar

NFRS End of Year Celebration:

Saturday, June 8

3 - 5 PM

Come join us for our End-of-Year Party!

At the home of Ellen and Paul Gilman

680 Oakwood Drive, Southold

RSVP by June 1 to Ellen Zimmerman at ezimmerman@naremco.com

Let us know whether you'll be bringing an hors d'oeuvre or a dessert!!



Spring

Shabbat Worship Services

Regular Friday Night Service 8:00 pm unless otherwise noted

May 3: **Yom Hashoa.** Rabbi Host: Beverly Price;

Oneg Host: Susan and Steve Bloom

17: Rabbi Host: Joyce and Richard Friedland; Oneg Host: Paul and Ellen Gilman

June 7: Rabbi Host: Ellen Love; Oneg Host: Fred Cohen

21: **Kenney's Beach Service:** 5:30 pm with Temple Israel of Riverhead and Congregation Tifereth Israel. Shabbat dinner provided.

Adult Ed

Saturdays 4 pm at the home of:

May 4: Beverly Price, 41 Waverly Ct, Wading River

18: Joyce and Richard Friedland, 105 Haywaters Rd, Cutchogue

Book Club

June 1: *The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish at Fred Cohen, 405 Wendy Dr., Laurel.

Synagogue Officers

Paul Gilman	President
Margo Lowry	Vice President
Kay Freeman	VP, Treasurer
Ellen Love	Secretary
Irwin Freeman	Trustee
Barry Mallin	Trustee
Barbara Sheryll	Trustee
Ellen Zimmerman	Trustee
Steve Hill	Past President

Mission Statement

The North Fork Reform Synagogue is a small, inclusive congregation meeting spiritual, educational, social, and cultural enrichment needs of our members in the Reform Jewish tradition. We embrace families and individuals, Jews by birth or “by choice,” non-Jews and Jews regardless of ethnic or racial background, sexual orientation, or gender identity. We support the local community through outreach programs with special emphasis on social justice issues.

Editors

Carol Brown, Editor-in-Chief
Kay Freeman
Joyce Friedland
Margo Lowry
Ellen Zimmerman

From Our Rabbi

Shalosh Regalim

By Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot



For those who are not already in the know, June 7-8 will be my last Shabbat weekend with North Fork Reform Synagogue... that is, until I come back in September! I am excited to be staying on as your student rabbi for a second year and look forward to seeing you all again in the fall.

As we prepare for the transition to summer routines, though, the Jewish calendar marches on. The evening of June 8 begins the holiday of Shavuot. In the cycle of the Jewish year, this is the third of the *Shalosh Regalim* – the three pilgrimage holidays of Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. Each holiday connects to a harvest season and a part of the Exodus story. On Sukkot, we gather the first fruits and dwell in temporary huts like the Israelites used in the desert; on Passover, we begin the barley harvest and retell the story of our journey from slavery to freedom; and on Shavuot, the barley harvest is in full swing, and we celebrate receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

Chances are, you're familiar with sitting in a *sukkah*, waving a *lulav* and *etrog* on Sukkot, and with participating in a Passover Seder, but you may not have a practice for Shavuot. Many Jews celebrate Shavuot with a *tikkun leil* – staying up all night to study, often synagogue-hopping from one lecture to another. Even if you value your sleep, consider starting a new book that day or reading an article that teaches you something new – maybe even this one!

Chag sameach!

From Our President

Women's Service and News from our Rabbi

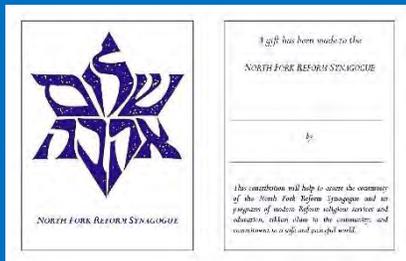
By Paul Gilman



April 5 was our annual Women's Shabbat Service. We are truly grateful to Kay Freeman's selections enlightening us on famous women who we may not have known were Jewish, the readers who brought to life these women, and to Steven Hill, Andrew Auerbach, and Irwin Freeman for providing the Oneg. Near the conclusion of the Service we received the most welcomed revelation. Our Rabbi, Danielle Weisbrot, announced to the congregation that she will remain our spiritual leader for 2019-2020 year. We have all rejoiced at Danielle's chanting of the prayers and Torah, her penetrating and personal teachings, and most importantly her compassion for our congregation and Reform Judaism. Please attend the NFRS' year-end party on June 8 to celebrate our successful year and to show Rabbi Danielle our gratitude for the past year and how blessed we are for our next year together.

The energy our April 5 Shabbat was sustained on April 6 by the NFRS' fundraiser "4 Women, 4 Stories" concert held at the Jamesport Meeting House.

Acknowledge a Simcha, or a Loss; a birth, a bar/bat mitzvah, a graduation, an engagement, a marriage, or other event in the lives of family or friends with a hand-inscribed tribute card from NFRS.



By giving *tzedakah*, you support the synagogue while offering your congratulations or condolences. We suggest a minimum donation of \$18 (*chai*).

Contact Kay Freeman to send a card: 631-722-5712
kaywin316@earthlink.net

Mail your check, payable to North Fork Reform Synagogue, Tribute Fund
PO Box 1625
Southold, NY 11971

Include recipient's name, mailing address, occasion, donor's name, address, phone and the amount of the contribution if you wish it included.

Developed by our own member, Peggy Schwartz, the concert included her cabaret friends Deborah Zecher, Lynda Rodolitz, and Helane Blumfield. Through Peggy's inspiration and hard work, and the coordination of our Program Team: Barbara Sheryll, and Margo Lowry, the North Fork of Long Island shines a little brighter.

My recommendation for the next few quiet months on the North Fork is to take the opportunity to visit one or two of our local wineries. Taste an aged chardonnay or cabernet franc, savoring the skill of our local winemakers before the visitor rush. Which reminds me, our cherished Foodie Tour Committee has already met and is planning this year's September 8th event. The Foodie Tour Committee and our other committees are always looking for new members. Specifics for these activities can be found in this newsletter and emailed announcements. Please participate, volunteer, and contribute to keep our Temple community vibrant and relevant.

Paul

Boy, Are We Lucky!

Each year at this time, we await notice from Hebrew Union College, letting us know who our new rabbi will be for next year. At the April 5 Shabbat service, Rabbi Danielle gave us the best news: she will be staying with us for another year! We've thoroughly enjoyed Rabbi Danielle this year...well-done and inspiring sermons, interesting adult ed sessions, as well as her winning personality and great sense of humor. How lucky we are that she will be staying with us for another year!

Programs & Events

The I-Didn't-Know-She-Was-Jewish Annual Women's Service

by Kay Freeman

On Friday, April 5 we joined together for our Annual Women's Shabbat Service. This year we focused on a group of diverse, talented women who many of us did not know were Jewish! Gabby Giffords, Emma Lazarus, Ayn Rand, Edna Ferber, and Lauren Bacall were a fascinating group! We thank the men and women of the synagogue who participated in the Women's Service, those who read about the women and those who were part of the Shabbat festivities as well.

Our next "special" service is May 3, Holocaust Remembrance Day. If you would like to participate in the service, please contact Kay: kaywin316@earthlink.net or 631-722-5712.

Birthdays & Anniversaries



Happy birthday to:

May 2: Cynthia Arimine-Klein
4: Carol Brown
8: Ronald Hellman
9: Bert Spitz
10: Kathleen Grossman
23: Jay Slotkin

June 1: Ellen Love
5: Nohra Corredor
Gavin Drago
6: Jane Stevens
Amy Godol (Deak)
12: Diane Auerbach
14: Jerry Levin
15: Paul Wachter
17: Stuart Grossman
18: Ellen Gilman
28: Marc Sheryll
29: Steven Hill
30: Billy Bennett
Sharna Nicholson

Anniversary wishes to:

May 15: Sara Zarem & Jerry Levin
24: Joan & Mike Furst
June 7: Kay & Irwin Freeman
11: Diane & Andrew Auerbach
15: Margo & Andy Lowry
16: Sue & Sandy Hanauer
17: Joanne Davis & Jay Slotkin
20: Gail Kriegel & Barry Mallin
29: Miriam & Michael Lastoria

Peer-to-Peer Training

Mattituck Jr/Sr HS FB Pages. April 7, 2019

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1230232933801788&id=352299141595176

Cross-district training continues for students from Mattituck, Southold and Greenport who have joined together to participate in Peer-to-Peer Training, a series of leadership training sessions and interactive workshops that will provide the students with knowledge, resources and facilitation skills to respond to bias and prejudice in their community and world. The training is being provided by the Anti-Defamation League of New York/New Jersey and financially supported by ADL, the Southold Town Anti-Bias Task Force. Thank you to all the donors who are supporting this important work. @ADL_NYNJ <https://nynj.adl.org/about/>



Purim Spiel: What a Blast!

On March 15, the NFRS Players acted up a storm in Purim Shpiel 2019! Thanks to Narrators Heidi Erwin, Alison Irwin, Carol Brown, and Gavin Drago, King Steve Hill, Vashti (Geri Armine-Klein), Esther (Marissa Drago) Haman (Irwin Freeman), Mordechai (Henry Spector) and Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot for a super, fun play. They were terrific! (The audience was fun, too, booing and making noise with their groggers in all the right places!)



How Can I support NFRS?

NFRS is grateful for membership dues and additional contributions. They help pay for our Rabbi and Cantor, rental of the Cutchogue Presbyterian Church, and the expenses of running a congregation. There are other ways you can support NFRS and help guarantee our future. Several members already chose one (or more!) of these ways to give to the synagogue.

Gift of Stock: a gift of publicly traded stock (long term) that appreciated in value allows you to take an income tax deduction for the full market value while avoiding capital gains taxes.

Gift from your IRA: Gifts directly from your IRA to NFRS (up to a certain amount) provide you an income tax deduction and avoidance of ordinary income tax on an IRA distribution.

Bequest in your Will: A bequest is a way to ensure that our synagogue continues, while costing nothing now. And if your circumstances change, you can always modify your will.

By selecting one or more of these options, you can impact the future of NFRS. Contact Kay 631-722-5712
Kaywin316@earthlink.net.

The 4 Women, 4 Stories Sold Out Performance

By Margo Lowry



It was a sold-out performance and an unforgettable evening. Our member, **Peggy Schwartz**, a part of the NYC cabaret community for the last 5 years and Executive Producer of the show, asked three of her artists friends to help create an evening of cabaret songs to benefit our synagogue.



She put together an accomplished team. **Helane Blumfield**, who after a 40-year career in Marketing took to the stage and most recently won a 2018 Broadway World Award for the solo show that played to sold out audiences. **Lynda Rodolitz**, a stand-up comic and actor, a 2017 MAC Award nominee for Musical Comedy Performance and the 2018 winner of Mama's Next BIG Act. And **Deborah Zecher**, who after a fulfilling 35 year career as a Reform rabbi, embraced the next chapter of her life as a cabaret singer whose first show was nominated for MAC award for best debut show. The show was directed by **Lennie Watts**, a legend in the New York City cabaret scene and **Bobby Peaco**, Musical Director arranged the music and expertly accompanied the singers.



All four women shared their life stories through the songs. The show started with the fabulous, *I Want it All* (Don't we all!), with lyrics adapted for each performer, by Lennie Watts. It set the tone for the rest of the evening and was followed by other favorites, like *I'm a Woman* (also with new lyrics by Lennie Watts), *America, That's Life, Too Old to Die Young* to name just a few. After a standing ovation followed by refreshments, the audience left humming their favorite tunes.



Thank you again to Peggy Schwartz and her team for their support, and to our other members, Sue Hearn of Suhru Wines, and Marissa Drago of Main Road Biscuit Company, who sponsored the refreshments.

It was the night to remember.

More ways to support NFRS

Why not support NFRS when you shop amazon.com? Every eligible purchase equals a donation to us!



Visit AmazonSmile (<https://smile.amazon.com>) and type in North Fork Reform Synagogue. That's it! Every time you order, go to the smile.amazon.com. The site remembers your selection and a donation will come to NFRS.

Typically, the AmazonSmile Foundation donates 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible purchases.

Questions? Contact Margo Lowry; margolowry@gmail.com. She can walk you through the process.



A Wonderful Tradition: 4th Annual Blooming Artists Concert

By Margo Lowry

On Sunday April 14, NFRS sponsored the 4th annual Blooming Artist concert



in collaboration with the East End Arts Council. This concert is the brainchild of our member, Fred Cohen, who is a Board Member and the Treasurer at East End Arts. He originally brought us together, and the rest is history! Over the last four years we have been privileged to help showcase talented young

artists who enthusiastically embrace this opportunity to play in front of an audience.



This year was no exception. Three students -- Franklin Mastrangelo, Anika Gott, and Fallon Spellman -- played and sang their hearts out. They chose their own repertoire which ranged from Bach to Frank Sinatra. They were young, adorable, a little shy, but brave, and thankful for the opportunity. There was a Q&A following the performance. When

asked how long they played their instruments, the answer was - since childhood. They don't remember when they did not. When asked how much they practice on any given day, the answer was - all the time. It is a part of their lives. They dream of a future career in music. We hope that in some small way we help them fulfill their dream.

This is what making the world a better place looks like.



Simchas

Mazel tov to *Sharna Nicholson* and *Carol Brown* who successfully completed Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) course. For their Action Projects, Sharna and fellow MGV John DiCerbo are planting and maintaining an herb, vegetable and flower garden at San Simeon Nursing Home. Carol and fellow MGV Cara Cunneen are rehabilitating and adding information stakes to the Southold Historical Society Museum's Colonial Herb Garden.

Mazel tov to *Jay Sheryll* for being awarded one of the 40 stars under 40 for his devotion and leadership in the community.

Cara Slotkin, daughter of founding members, *Joanne and Jay Slotkin*, has won a Fulbright Scholarship! She will be completing the English Teaching Assistant Program in Rwanda.

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Hebrew School

Students Celebrate Purim and Learn about Tzedakah

By Rabbi Barbara Horowitz-Sheryll

As part of our *Tzedakah* studies, Hebrew School students visited the food pantry at the United Methodist Church to donate clothing and food from our food drive. Sue Duffin explained how the pantry came into existence, how they are looking for a new home, and most importantly, how they serve up to 100 individuals and families each week. Clients come by bike, bus, or carpool Thursdays 3:00 -5:00pm to shop for food donated by the community and Long Island Cares.



Please bring food to any service you attend so we can continue to support those in need and the good work that the food pantry does.

Purim: Thanks to Hebrew School teacher Renee Navarrete and parents Marissa Drago and Danielle Jacobs-Erwin, the children made the dough for the most delicious *hamantaschen*. Together they filled 20 *shaloch manot* bags that were given to the Purim Players and those that came to see them perform.

As we transition through that Jewish Calendar, we are reminded that as Jews, we are to be mindful that on one hand this world was created for us and on the other hand, from dust we came and to dust we will return. In the same vein Passover and Purim emphasize that we were slaves once and that we should exist as if we personally left Egypt. Only with a healthy balance of these messages will we achieve wholeness and peace. Shalom.

Chef's Corner

White Wine Sangria

following President Paul Gilman's suggestion to visit local wineries

- 1 c. sliced strawberries
- 1 mango, cubed
- 1 peach, sliced
- 1/4 c. granulated sugar
- 1/4 c. Grand Marnier
- 1 apple, sliced
- 1 orange, sliced
- 1 lime, sliced
- 1 (750-mL) bottle white wine, chilled
- 1 c. seltzer



DIRECTIONS

In a medium bowl, combine strawberries, mango, peaches, sugar and Grand Marnier. Refrigerate for 1 hour. To a large pitcher, add refrigerated fruit, apples, oranges, and limes. Pour in white wine and seltzer and stir to combine. Serve well chilled.

Newsletter Sponsorship

Consider sponsoring a NFRS Newsletter.

Send a check for \$100 payable to the North Fork Reform Synagogue with the following information:

Your Name

Address

Reason for sponsorship

If memory for a loved one, please name.

If for another special occasion, please describe.

Mail to:

North Fork Reform Synagogue
PO Box 1625
Southold, NY 11971

Business Sponsorships

Another way to support NFRS and to get your business known is to advertise your business in the Newsletter.

Annual Fee, 6 Issues
Business Card size \$100
Double Business Card \$200

Contact Kay

Our Members

Will return in July.

Wishing Linda Hill best wishes on her surgery.

Memorialize your Departed Loved Ones

Several years ago, we dedicated our second bronze Memorial Plaque, underwritten by the generosity of our members, Arlene and Ed Fox. This plaque, hanging next to our first memorial plaque in the vestibule as you enter the front door of the sanctuary, offers our members the opportunity to memorialize their loved ones.

The tablet accommodates 30 individual nameplates; each 2" x 10" nameplate features a light lit both on the Yahrzeit of the deceased as well as on Yom Kippur. The memorialized names are featured in our Book of Remembrance on Yom Kippur. The member may choose to have the English name of the deceased on the plaque or both the English and the Hebrew names. The donation for each is \$500.

Several of our members have already ordered nameplates for the new memorial wall. Note that due to the limited number of nameplates available, this opportunity is open only to members of the North Fork Reform Synagogue.

Please contact Irwin Freeman (kaywin316@earthlink.net or 631-722-5712) for an order form or for further information.

Wanted: Person to Establish an NFRS Fund for Education

*NFRS is in need of a generous member (or friend) who would be willing to establish an Education Fund. This fund would help to meet the educational needs of our NFRS students, including Hebrew and Judaica/Religious Studies.**

You can be sure that this Education Fund will impact the lives and the Jewish identity of our students. Wouldn't you want to be a part of that?

Please contact Kay Freeman at 631-722-5712 or kaywin316@earthlink.net to discuss this further. I look forward to hearing from you.

*This fund could be established with a tax-deductible donation of check, stock, or gift of your IRA.

My Two Cents

From former rabbinic intern Tobias Divack Moss:

To my beloved NFRS congregants,

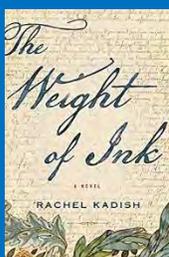
I am excited to inform you that I was hired to be the new assistant rabbi at Temple Israel of Minneapolis. Though I had never been to Minneapolis before the interview, I became enamored with this thriving congregation and beautiful cultured city. I am so grateful to you all for providing me with my first pulpit position filled with such nurturing opportunities. The lessons I learned at NFRS have prepared me for this exciting next step. You are always welcome to visit the Twin Cities and say hello.

My ordination seminary from HUC-JIR is on May 5th from 9am-12pm at Congregation Emanu-El of NYC. All are welcome to attend. If you plan to come, please email me so I can keep an eye out for you! TobiasMoss@gmail.com

Join us for the next NFRS Book Club

Saturday, June 1
11 AM

At the home of Fred Cohen
405 Wendy Drive, Laurel



Our next Book Club discussion, led by Margo Lowry, is *The Weight of Ink* by Rachel Kadish. This is an intellectual and emotional jigsaw puzzle of a novel for readers of Geraldine Brooks' *People of the Book*.

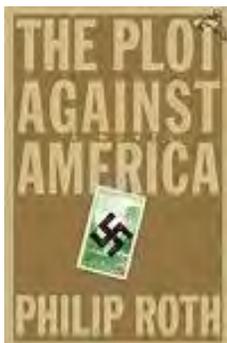
Set in London of the 1660s and the early 21st century, *The Weight of Ink I* is the interwoven tale of two women of remarkable intellect: Ester Velasquez – an immigrant from Amsterdam who is permitted to scribe for a bind Rabbi just before the plague hits the city, and Helen Wailing – an ailing historian with a love of Jewish history.

Electrifying and ambitious, sweeping in scope and intimate in tone, *The Weight of Ink* is a sophisticated work of historical fiction about women separated by centuries, and the choices and sacrifices they must make in order to reconcile the life of the heart and mind.

Book Club

The Plot Against America by Philip Roth

by Jerry Levin



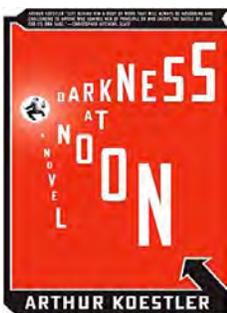
The NFRS Book Club met at Ellen Love's on March 16th to discuss Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*. Jerry Levin led the discussion.

In his novel, Roth envisions Charles Lindbergh and his strongly anti-Semitic America First Movement defeating Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 election. We then see the impact of the election through the eyes and experiences of Newark's magnificently evoked Jewish community.

The group was uniformly distressed by both the novel itself and its contemporary resonance (one member reporting having had a nightmare after reading it), although Roth stated when it was published in 2004, he didn't intend any current reference. We all felt that as dark as the events depicted were, the sheer brilliance of the writing, the scope of the author's vision and imagination, and the depth of his characterizations made reading it an exhilarating experience. It was as if Roth's aesthetic achievement serves as a counter-balance to the terrifying possibilities it makes all too real.

Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*

by Jerry Levin



The NFRS Book Club met at Kay Freeman's home on April 13th to discuss Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*. The novel is set during the 1930s Soviet Purge Trials, which Stalin used to successfully destroy the older generation of Bolshevik revolutionary leaders, who he feared as potential rivals. Told through the eyes of the protagonist, Rubashov, one of the founding fathers of the Soviet state, we follow him from his arrest, to his multiple interrogations, to his public confession of crimes he didn't commit in an attempt to expiate his guilt for crimes he did commit--all in the name of bringing about the workers' paradise promised by the Party--to his execution. The novel raises the question of whether ends, however exalted, can ever justify the use of evil means, including murder. It also raises, the perhaps unanswerable question, of how we can have ideals, which human beings apparently need, without following those ideals over the cliff into rigidity and destructiveness.

The group uniformly found the novel painful, yet perhaps a necessary reading that induces thoughtfulness as well as fear that there are all too many parallels to it in today's political landscape.

Jerry's Reflections

Against the Current

By Jerry Levin

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; ...

The best lack all conviction, while the worst/

Are full of passionate intensity."

The Vital Center



Reading Isaiah Berlin's brilliant essays in "Against The Current," I was particularly engaged by "The Counter-Enlightenment." And it was this essay that brought Yeats's lines quoted above to mind. Sir Isaiah who was born into a prosperous Jewish family in a Russian Baltic province before the First World War became a knighted British citizen, a long time president of an Oxford college and a prominent public intellectual.

"The Counter-Enlightenment" displays Berlin's best qualities as a writer and historian -- incredible erudition, deep insight into the development of ideas, and a powerful conviction that, for good or ill, those ideas matter, all expressed in vivid, clear prose. His essays on Moses Hess, a Marxist founder of Zionism, and on Disraeli and Marx are equally excellent.

The enlightenment was an 18th century intellectual, aesthetic and political movement that espoused freedom of thought, rationality, science as a source of empirically verified truth, rejection of all forms of authoritarian control - secular or religious - and mystification in the service of power. Its champions were as varied as the Jefferson of the Declaration, Voltaire and his fellow philosophers, and my favorite, Ben Franklin, who wrote that "the truest worship of God is benevolence to one's fellow men." Heavily, but not exclusively French in origin, it was strongly anti-clerical, opposed to the heavy hand of tyranny wherever it appeared as it strove to expose the rationalizations such as the theory of the divine rights of kings that justified that tyranny. Although some of its ideas were co-opted by absolute rulers, it tended to support democratic political forms and generally supported (in spite of Voltaire's anti-Semitism) the emancipation of the Jews, the breaking down of ghetto walls, and assimilation of the Jews into the general body politic. Somewhat later in the 19th century, Jews created their own version of enlightenment thought - the Haskalah.

Berlin's essay recounts the immediate, vehement, and on-going (into our own time) reaction against enlightenment values and projects. Its opponents ranged from the English conservative political theorist Edmund Burke (another anti-

E.E.J.C.C.



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Semite) to the mystical nationalist German philosopher Johann Fichte (you gusted it - anti-Semitic too). In one form or another, counter-enlightenment thinkers affirmed the primacy of feeling over reason as a foundation of truth, preferred traditional political and economic structures, however irrational, over innovative ones supported by empirical evidence and logic. They consistently defended authoritarian secular and ecclesiastical institutions over freely chosen associations; and appealed to "blood and soil." They rejected the enlightenment's claims of universal moral values expressed in such statements as, "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . ", instead upholding the sanctity of the particular. Enlightenment thought was condemned as superficial and "elitist." The emancipated Jews were pilloried for "rootless cosmopolitanism."

The seeds of fascism are clearly visible in anti-enlightenment ideology. But it is to Berlin's credit that as strongly as he condemns the destructive potential of anti-enlightenment thought he sees the validity of at least some of its criticism of the enlightenment. Human beings do have deep needs for community, for identity, for the hope religion provides, and for the feeling of being a participant in a historical drama that the enlightenment either didn't see or disavowed and it did so at its peril. By and large anti-enlightenment values have prevailed. People all too readily vote against their "rational" self-interest if they feel their "cultural values" are threatened.

Berlin believes that any polity to be successful must meet these "irrational" needs in a way that doesn't unleash the destructive potential of "blood and soil" , nor lose the enlightenment's belief in the sanctity of universal rights. Berlin is a man of the vital center, while being fully aware of the difficulties of staying there.

However, when it comes to Reform Judaism, Berlin has a blind spot. He famously said, "The synagogue I don't attend is an Orthodox one" and disparages Reform Judaism and its founder Abraham Geiger as deracinating and destructively assimilationist. I, on the contrary, thank the God I don't believe in for a Reform Judaism that does offer community, historical continuity, ethical guidance, identity, and emotionally transformative ritual without being mired in a dead past or let dogma stifle freedom of thought. At its best, Reform synthesizes the enlightenment's insight into the irrationality of so much human belief with the counter-enlightenment's insight that non-rational needs must be met. It does indeed occupy the vital center.

