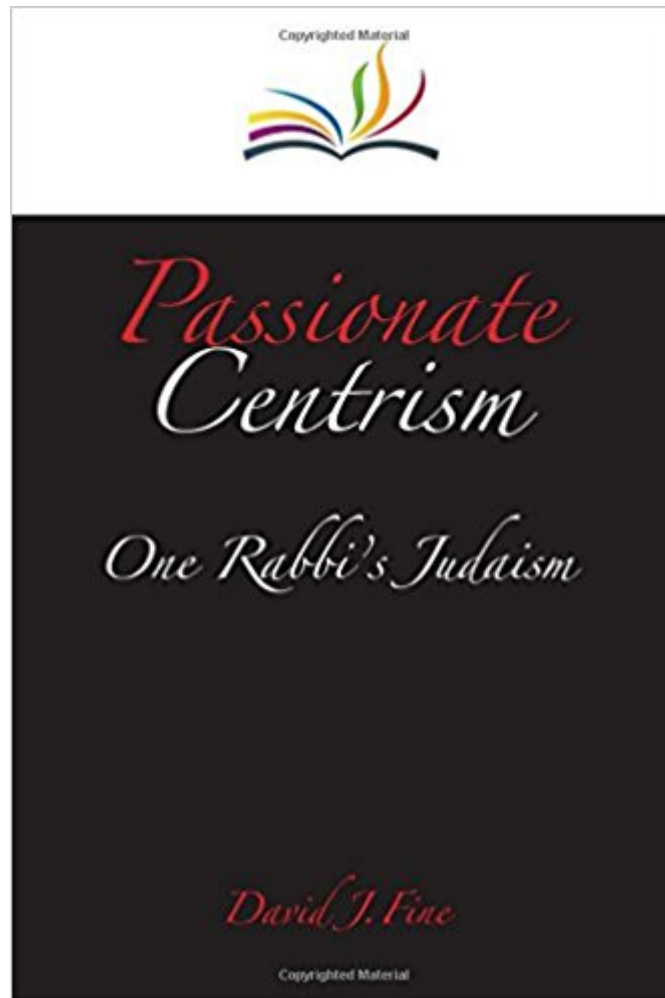




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# Passionate Centrism: One Rabbi's Judaism



## Synopsis

Passionate Centrism is an important discussion of Positive Historical Judaism and the benefit of holding the center of Judaism—that is, the Conservative Movement. This book is an important resource for clergy and other congregational leaders and is an excellent product for lecture series.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

We hope this book will be read and studied by people in all the Jewish religious movements, for we do not have many such books that force us to re-examine our stands as this one does. This book is challenging, and not comfortable to read for many of us, but the questions that it raises must be confronted by us all. (The Jewish Advocate)The complex relationship between an ancient, holy tradition and a modern, rationalistic culture drives many to one extreme or the other. Rabbi Fine's vision of a third way resists simplistic dichotomies and invites the reader—whether Jew or Gentile, religious or secular—into a way of thinking, and a way of life, in which the deep resources of the past continue to engage and shape a life rooted in our present intellectual and social climate. Insightful, brave, and warmly personal, *Passionate Centrism* writes a new chapter in the dialogue between faith and understanding. This book is a great blessing. (Rev. Canon John G. Hartnett, St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church)*Passionate Centrism* is a spirited invitation to embrace a Judaism that can move confidently into the future precisely because it is committed to Judaism's ancient sources and rooted in a clear-eyed understanding of Jewish history. Throughout this book, Rabbi David Fine surprises the reader as he offers liberal reasons to support traditionalist conclusions—and traditionalist reasons to

welcome liberal changes in Jewish law and belief. Marked by admirable clarity, impressive scholarship, and deft argumentation, this book is both an important read and an accessible one. (Benjamin D. Sommer, Jewish Theological Seminary, author of *Revelation and Authority: Sinai in Jewish Scripture and Tradition*) At a time when Jews around the globe search for their Jewish identities, Dr. David Fine convincingly identifies a key path to authentic Judaism. He ties Conservative Judaism back to its “positive historic” beginnings and carves out his vision for a passionate Jewish future: as an evolving culture of law in a historical context and with a view to find God through meaningful observance. (Walter Homolka, University of Potsdam, Germany) In a world torn apart by both political and religious extremists, it is downright refreshing to read Rabbi David Fine’s thoughtful and passionate defense of a moderate, centrist interpretation of Judaism. Readers may not be convinced of absolutely every one of his applications of the positive-historical approach to Jewish practice, liturgy, law, and theology, but they surely will be impressed by his knowledge of Jewish sources, his appreciation of the nuances of the issues he treats, and his impressive wisdom and humanity in addressing these issues. If only more Jews understood and practiced Judaism as he does! (Elliot Dorff, American Jewish University) Conservative Judaism can breathe anew. Here’s an accessible retort to being “a middle ground between Reform and Orthodoxy.” Rabbi David Fine offers real distinction for prayer, practice, and protocol. He critiques what has been and clarifies a vision for what might be, with personal passion and intellectual integrity. (Elyse Frishman, editor, *Mishkan Tefilah: A Reform Siddur*)

David J. Fine is the rabbi of Temple Israel and Jewish Community Center in Ridgewood, New Jersey, and is also an adjunct professor of Jewish law at the Abraham Geiger and Zacharias Frankel Colleges at the University of Potsdam in Germany. He was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and received his PhD in modern European history from the City University of New York.

When I started I wanted a strong defense of Conservative Judaism and what I got was a book I paid too much for (ebook version) to hear a guy who is clearly agnostic try to pretend that Judaism means more than some thing you do on a Friday night. I love law arguments, his responsa was decent and I liked to read it, yet I found a guy who loved process and not g-d. Why should I fast on Yom Kippur or put up with family on Passover if none of it happened? Further more, why should I be Jewish if Christians, Buddhists, or Branch Davidians have some truth? Conservative Judaism can be

a strong, reasoned response to the reality of the world. This is why, this book fails, this movement has suffered with members bleeding off. Wishy-Washy. This answers the question: Should I get a Christmas tree, maybe eat a ham and cheese sandwich with some lobster bisque on Yom Kippur.?Why not?To paraphrase Rush Limbaugh, he hates centrists because they don't stand for anything. Now he might be a schmuck, but this book proves him right.This book should be titled: Judaism without Chutzpah.

I highly recommend this book. With clear and accessible argument, in a lively, engaging style, Rabbi Fine brings fresh insight into the relevance of Conservative Judaism for today's Jewish community and for contemporary religious life at-large. In *Passionate Centrism*, he makes a powerful case for the importance of a moderate, centrist interpretation of Judaism. With an engaging style, he reveals liberal reasons to support traditionalist conclusions and traditionalist reasons to welcome liberal changes in Jewish law and belief, as held up by today's Conservative Jewish movement. Rabbi Fine shares his theology in depth, exploring issues of Jewish law, crafted from years of writing and editing responsa for the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly and experience in the pulpit. Among these are: keeping kosher, driving to synagogue on Shabbat, music on Shabbat, liturgical changes, egalitarianism and same-sex marriage. With his understanding of context and how legal interpretation has evolved through the ages, Rabbi Fine helps readers reflect on the Conservative movement's meaning and relevance for our time and for each of us, personally. Anyone with an interest in grappling with tough issues of faith, belief and commitment to religious practice in an age of convenience and immediate gratification will appreciate this serious and sophisticated work.

Rabbi's Fine's clear, cogent reasoning and engaging literary style make *Passionate Centrism* an ideal source for an in-depth understanding of Conservative Judaism from its historical roots through its flexibility as a living religion within the context of modernity. He makes it clear that Conservative Judaism is not merely some sort of compromise between Orthodoxy and Reform. Rabbi Fine's transparency about his personal viewpoints, hence the subtitle *One Rabbi's Judaism*, adds further texture and, yes, passion to the subject matter. I highly recommend *Passionate Judaism* to the intellectually curious reader.

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