

With the rise of Marshall McLuhan, Electronic Music, Psychedelics, Computers, and the Sensitivity-Encounter Human Potential movement, the terms linear and non-linear have come into widespread use. These terms "linear" and "non-linear", once clarified, I believe, can shed light upon the current crisis situation in Reform Judaism. It is my purpose to spell out the distinctions between linear and non-linear, and then to outline some practical notions about a non-linear Judaism. In the process, an attempt will also be made to outline our present crisis in terms of linear and non-linear thinking.

In order to begin to comprehend the difference between linear and non-linear, it would be helpful to think of a straight line and a circle. Imagine, if you will, two equally long pieces of string, one lying flat in the form of a straight line, and the other arranged as a circle. Having started with two equally long pieces of string, a rather strange phenomenon takes place when we now think about measuring the distance between the ends of the two pieces of string. With the straight piece of string, we measure the distance between the two ends as "length", whereas with the circle we measure the distance between the two ends as the "circumference". What on one level is the same phenomenon (equal lengths of string), becomes on another level two apparently different phenomena (length versus circumference).

Another illustration would add to our understanding of linear versus non-

linear. Imagine two different types of clocks set side by side, one would be the standard circular type with the numbers 1-12 printed on the face of the clock, while the other would be one of the newer digital types. In the first instance, 9 o'clock would be shown with the short arm pointing to 9 and the long arm pointing to 12. In the second instance the same time, 9 o'clock, would be shown as "9:00". Note that while both clocks describe the same phenomenon (9 o'clock), in the latter case we have but a statement of fact "9:00", whereas in the former case we also are presented with a statement of relation, it is 9 o'clock on a twelve-hour cycle.

Comparison of the two illustrations will further our understanding. The straight line of the first illustration and the digital readout clock of the second illustration are linear, whereas the circle of the first illustration and the circular 1-12 clock of the second represent non-linear measurement of time. Linear measurement of time implies a starting point and an end point, while non-linear measurement of time implies a cycle and a series of cycles.

The Jewish holy days combine both a linear and a non-linear awareness of the time continuum. Using Passover as a concrete example, we note that it is both *Hag ha-aviv*, the spring festival, and *Zeman Hairutainu*, the time of the exodus from Egypt. Pesach represents to us both linear and non-linear time. As the celebration of the exodus from Egypt, Pesach represents a specific point on the time line of Jewish history, being

thereby a linear time reference. By calling our attention to the seasonal fluctuation, Pesach becomes a non-linear time reference.

Judaism contains both a linear and a non-linear time awareness. Jewish history represents a time awareness that is linear, while our Jewish holy days represent a time awareness that is non-linear or cyclical. We enrich our time awareness when we think of the Jewish life cycle rituals, such as bris, Bar Mitzvah, Kiddushin and death. In a specific individual, starting from birth to death, we have a linear marking of growth and age. When we place several individuals together, we get a pattern which we refer to as a life cycle. We thus begin to think on a three-dimensional level of time awareness; historical, seasonal and personal.

Accepting the notion that Judaism contains within itself all three dimensions, it would make sense to say that at any given moment in time, the individual Jew participates on all three time dimensions. The Bar Mitzvah boy, for example, by definition participates on the time level of his personal life cycle. By reading the weekly Torah portion, he participates in the seasonal or yearly time cycle. In becoming Bar Mitzvah during a given year, say 1972, he participates on the linear or historical time level.

As the individual Jew participates on all three time dimensions, he or she is affected by the particular configuration or coming together of these dimensions. Consider for example, two Bar Mitzvah boys who read the same Torah portion,

but become Bar Mitzvah in different years. These two Bar Mitzvah boys share participation in the same personal and seasonal-yearly cycle, but at different points in linear time. The variance in historical moment becomes important if one takes place before and one after the Holocaust and the Jewish State.

Picking up on the significance of variation within a time dimension, let us consider, but briefly, the fluctuation possible within each of the time dimensions. The most obvious differences occur within the personal and seasonal-yearly time dimensions, while the historical variations are not as clear cut. On the personal time dimension, we note significant differences between a child aged 5, a teenager of 17, and an adult of 35. These differences appear on a bodily comparison, a psychological comparison, and a comparison of responsibility to self and others. On a seasonal or yearly cycle dimension, we note differences between summer and winter, in not only the clothes worn, but also the type of activities engaged in.

On the historical or linear time dimension, we note that the historical events of the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel have changed the complexion of not only American, but world Jewish life. In the United States the Six Day War brought Jews out of the woodwork, from a state of ambivalence about being Jewish to a state of personal pride in being Jewish. It is doubtful that the reawakening of Jewish pride in Russia would have happened had it not been for the Six Day War.

Inasmuch as we are living in an age of discontinuity and rapid change, it is no great surprise that our place in the historical linear continuum has brought about a crisis within the Jewish community, and especially within Reform Judaism. As Reform Jews we are caught up in the overall crisis of maintaining continuity with a historical tradition, while at the same time participating in the great technological and social change that is taking place around and within us. In contemplating the changes that we must make in order to maintain our Jewish institutions, it would be an unforgivable error were we not to pay attention to the three dimensions, historical, personal and seasonal of time.

I believe that the personal and seasonal time dimensions are more significant than the historical. It will be my task to now show how Jewishly we have lived through our linear time emphasis, and must now move on to the personal and seasonal time dimensions. By moving from linear Judaism to non-linear Judaism, we would best provide continuity, while underwriting change. The question is not one of either/or, but of focus and starting point.

It is helpful to equate non-linear with cyclical. In common talk non-linear is associated with spontaneity, chaos and emotion. Those who depart from linear "law and order" thinking usually plead or shout the case for non-structure. Those whose training leads them to think in strict linear or "A follows B" thinking become agitated with the thought of not having structure. I

believe that both sides are correct and wrong. Those who talk non-structure are correct in criticizing the existing structure, but are wrong in speaking of non-structure. Those who hold to structure are correct, but choose the wrong structure. Both the linear-historical and the personal, seasonal non-linear cyclical time perspectives assume structure. The issue comes down to a choice of structure. The choice on a simplistic, even exaggerated, scale is the following: do we build a round house with square rooms, or a square house with round rooms?

Let us now see where and when the three time dimensions became operative within our Jewish tradition, and then show how the linear notion has played itself out as the primary focus. Biblical Judaism operated on the seasonal or yearly cycle time dimension. Living within a natural environment, with the need to pay attention to the seasonal cycle for agricultural information, the biblical Jew was aware of seasonal changes, and built these into his religious system as celebration of the seasons. Pesach celebrates the spring, Shevuot celebrates the harvest of the spring crops. Sukkot celebrates the final gathering in of the crops. The Sabbath recognizes the weekly cycle, and man's need to set aside a weekly day of rest. The emphasis was on the repetitive on-going cycles.

Rabbinic Judaism superimposed linear-historical and personal life cycle time dimensions on the seasonal festival celebrations. The debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees about the

after-life and the concept of resurrection of the dead can be viewed as a debate about the over-riding time concept. Cyclical biblical time views death as the end of life, the end of the individual life cycle. Linear time extends life; albeit in limbo, until a future point when resurrection takes place.

For Biblical Judaism, the Messiah is an embodied physical king who by definition is anointed with the ceremonial oil. For Rabbinic Judaism, the Messiah is presently a spiritual concept, with the hope of an eventual fleshing out of the concept into the physical body of the personalized Messiah. For Biblical Judaism, the Messiah is here and now, whereas for Rabbinic Judaism, the Messiah is to come at a given, but unknown, point in future time.

Although at times confused, and at times clearer in co-relation, there is at least a minimal relationship between Resurrection and the Messiah. Both concepts are in the far-off linear history. There is another crucial touchstone involved in both Resurrection and Messiah, and that is the tie with the land, with Israel.

The desire to be buried in Israel, and the refusal of the residents of Mea Shearim to recognize Israel as a reality are related phenomena. Messiah, with its original tie to independent

political sovereignty has in effect been actualized, although not in the proper Rabbinic manner. The residents of Mea Shearim are in effect waiting for the Rabbinical ceremony involving an embodied Messiah. The desire to be buried in Israel seems to imply that Resurrec-

tion will take place within Israel's borders.

The reality of Israel as an independent political entity presents the modern Jew, and especially at present the American Jew, with a major theological problem. Unfortunately, this problem is easily pushed aside by the real day to day financial needs of Israel. While continuing to live up to our real financial obligations to the continued existence of the Jewish State, we need to pay serious attention to this underlying theological problem.

With all due fairness to those who have worked on the concrete needs of Israel as their proper priorities, the current crisis in the synagogue must now be recognized and honestly dealt with. Any attempt to build up a strong Jewish Community here as a support for the continued existence of Israel must come to grips with the fact that for the most part the messianic hopes of the Jewish people have been fulfilled. The many prayers and yearnings for a return to the land in effect have been answered.

We have operated on the general premise that because of our sins we have been exiled from our land. Now that we are back on the land what happens to the premise of sinfulness?

The return to the land has in effect changed our self-concept from negative to positive, this argument reaches the following conclusion: Linear Judaism has reached its climax with the return to the land. On a psychological level, the Jews are back with mother earth. After centuries of living with father

God (a pharisaic concept), the Jews are reconciling themselves with mother earth. The problem is twofold, reacceptance of the maternal contact, and a reworking of the relationship to the paternal influence.

Within the psychiatric, psychological and encounter therapy circles, there is an attempt to combine both verbal working through of personality problems and a physical removing of the bodily tensions associated with these problems. The thrust of these therapeutic approaches is to reconcile mind and body, the spiritual and the physical.

Judaism recognizes the essential unity between body and soul. Within man there is a co-relation between heaven and earth, between the physical and the spiritual. Return to the land for the Jews parallels the therapeutic return to the body, but there is a need for the reworking of the spiritual-mind component. At this point our verbal liturgies, as the manifestation of the verbal-spiritual component, must now come to grips with the return to the physical.

Repeating the therapeutic simultaneous attention to both the spiritual and the physical, and its implied working towards a reunification of mind and body, we are now in a position to make the following observation. Within the corporate body of Jewish life, where Zionism has worked towards the reclamation of the physical (land), Reform Judaism has worked towards the reclamation of the mind (reason and rationality).

Historically we have noted that

where Zionism grew out of the Russian Jewish community, Reform Judaism grew out of the German Jewish community. If we but bring to light the background out of which this duality grew, we shall see more clearly the mind-body, or physical-spiritual duality involved. The Russian Jews living in the Pale of Settlement were still physical prisoners, whereas the deghettoized German Jews were free physically, but not spiritually. Zionism arising out of the Russian Jewish experience was a physically oriented one, whereas the Reform movement arising from the German Jewish experience was an intellectual, mind-oriented movement.

The transition that Reform Judaism underwent in relation to the physical land must now be joined by the transition back to a physical bodily orientation. In the pursuit of intellectual and spiritual honesty, the writers of the *Union Prayer Book* figuratively and practically disembodied Jewish worship. In working through the verbal analytic level of Judaism, the writers of the *Union Prayer Book* have eliminated almost all direct reference to the physical body. Note that the clear body references of the traditional morning benedictions are not to be found in the *Union Prayer Book*, Volume One, although they are found in a rather abridged version in the Yom Kippur morning service of Volume Two.

The highly verbal Reform liturgy, with the lack of the physical ritual objects of the yarmulke, tallis and tephillin, can also be seen on the ac-

tive-passive continuum as the polar opposite of the orthodox or traditional service. The active-passive continuum is parallel to the body-soul polarity. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the classical Reform service is for the participant mostly passive, whereas in the more traditional service the participant is much more actively involved?

The therapeutic approach towards mind-body unity recognizes that emotions are tied to the body, whereas words are tied to the mind. The various approaches strive to reunite the physical and verbal into a whole person. The more recent trend back towards communal singing within the Reform service and the reintroduction of Hebrew and other manifestations of the emotional component represent a movement back towards the physicalization of Jewish worship.

The reintroduction of singing into the worship service parallels a development within therapy. The various therapies which concentrate on the physical, as well as verbal analytic, are stressing the importance of breathing as part of the movement towards emotional health. These therapies make a distinction between breathing for physical existence and breathing for a fuller life. The unhealthy individual breathes shallowly, whereas the healthy individual takes a deep breath.

Singing involves a deeper breathing pattern than does the responsive or unison readings. By involving the worshipper in deeper breathing through singing, there is the related deeper emotional and physical involvement of the

participants. Within Jewish history, the development of the early Hassidic movement with its singing, dancing and simple story telling represents the rejection of the linear-rational modality for the more pleasurable bodily oriented non-linear emotional modality.

The movement towards a positive orientation of Reform Judaism toward the physical, both the land and the body, leads us towards the non-linear or cyclical time dimension. We mentioned earlier the biblical base of the cyclical time dimension within Judaism, and the linear-historical time dimension within Rabbinic Judaism. In terms of a linear-non-linear presentation, Reform Judaism represents an interesting phenomenon.

In order to provide a sense of authenticity to the early Reform movement, two biblical patterns were reintroduced. The synagogue became the Temple and halacha was replaced by the moralistic voice of the prophets. An inner conflict was introduced. The debate over the role of religious functionary versus teacher of Torah has to be seen in light of the strange juxtaposition of claims for Reform rabbinical authority. The conflict also has to be seen on the time dimensional level. "Temple" implies the seasonal or cyclical time dimension associated with the priesthood. "Rabbi" implies the historical-linear time dimension associated with the teaching function of Rabbinical Judaism.

Today there is a diminishing of the historical linear patterns, and a serious questioning of the position of authority. Actually, these two factors are related to

each other. The commonly used phrase of "party-line or company line" exhibits the correlation between linear thinking and authority. The amount of authority one has is based on one's place along the line. Authority and responsibility go hand in hand up the line; the greater the responsibility the more authority. Such a production line approach lies behind Eichmann's plea of being but a cog in the wheel or the excuse of following orders.

Interestingly enough, the overall direction of emotional therapy is towards having the individual take responsibility for himself or herself. The patient often uses the excuse "I can't" instead of "I don't want to" or "I choose not to". The therapist points out to the patient that saying "I can't" removes the responsibility from the patient. There are tremendous theological implications involved in the "I can't" response. The logical conclusion of such a statement is that "God is preventing me from doing it".

How many rabbis must step out of the rabbinical role to do counseling? The therapist acts to use his "authority" to force the patient to take more responsibility for himself. The rabbi finds himself in conflict between maintaining authority and responsibility and giving over the responsibility to the individual with whom he is counseling.

If the conflict is not clear at this level, move it into the arena of Jewish Worship. The marked ambivalence about creative worship is between the clear need for it and the giving up of

responsibility (read "authority" to laymen).

Youth today are being joined by the not-so-young in asking rabbis to be more relevant. This call is first a call for the rabbis to be in touch with the times. Secondly, it is a call for Jewish knowledge—to be taught not preached to. This call runs counter to the historic-linear authority model or the rabbi and suggests a cyclical-teacher model.

In further developing this cyclical-teacher model, we now bring in the personal time dimension. The Rabbinic life cycle time dimension notes well the changes the individual undergoes during his lifetime. Unfortunately, the synagogue has undergone a strict linear development. We have classified our congregants into religious school, youth groups, young marrieds, sisterhood and brotherhood. We have participated in the disuniting of the family by such an arrangement. The result of this disunity is the parental notion of having to expose their children to Judaism.

This disunity of "exposing" children to Judaism, which leads the car door to open to discharge the youngsters at 9:30 and to open again at 12 noon to pick them up, puts the children in the position of young people who "die of exposure". Why do we shy away from Family Jewish education in favor of religious school? Because of our linear way of thinking. In therapy one speaks of the "identified patient", a terminology which recognizes that the other members of the family have and will

affect the treatment and well being of the patient. The religious school child is treated as an identified patient without, however, moving to affect the family system.

We must move away from linear thinking towards non-linear cyclical thinking. We must move toward family education and programming, although recognizing the personal age-determined needs of the individual members of the family. We must move towards an enrichment of our Sabbath and Holy Day celebrations, through innovative worship and the teaching of traditions.

Two problems which face contemporary Jews must and can be responded to by moving into a more cyclical Judaism. First is the problem of relating to Israel in more than monetary terms. Secondly, there is a need for family time in a rather hectic but disuniting weekly schedule. If we were to begin again to institute the Sabbath as a family Jewish day, we could help the families find time for each other and use the Sabbath to parallel the observance of the Sabbath in Israel. We would thereby help our congregants to worship together, to study Torah and get out of the rat race of the week, all very traditional notions of the Sabbath.

The Holy Days of the Jewish calendar are viable formats for the American Jews to share with our Israeli brethren,

not only in an awareness of the natural rhythm of season change, but also in common (time) the celebration of being Jewish.

A further action orientation is needed. We need to re-evaluate and rework our approaches to life problems in accordance with both current therapies and Jewish tradition. Attention paid to the rhythmic cycles of the year and of daily life and personal growth will solve two problems at one time—the personal needs of the people and the continuity of Jewish life.

No attention has been paid to the transition in Reform thinking from the Messiah to the Messianic Era. This was a conscious decision insofar as the transition was a disavowing of the tie of the “Messiah” to the land. It also, however, participates in the linear mode of thinking about time, for the Messianic Era is off in the distance. In bringing about such a Messianic time we must begin today, by conscious and deliberate action, to respond to the needs of our congregants. By starting to teach Jewish responsibility and acting on it today, we hasten the days of the Messianic Era. Tradition tells us that were all the Jews to observe but one Shabbat the Messiah would arrive. Common sense tells us that were we to institute Sabbath observance for our families, for the participants the Messianic Era will have already been ushered in.