Changing Wisdoms with Reform Judaism

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Our bodies and environments seemed incomprehensibly complex until we discovered cells and molecules. To many, our history and personal experience still seem so. But using modes of practice as a unit analogous to cells and molecules opens possibilities for understanding that we can barely imagine without them. From 2009-2013 Dr. David Kirk Dirlam, conducted developmental interviews of all the Rabbinical faculty of our Reform seminary, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. Together they used modes of practice principles to describe the development of their expertise. The result provides a microscope for our tradition like no other. It laid the changing wisdoms of Reform Judaism on the table. Since July 2022 snippets from their work have found a place in the second paragraph of our Temple's Torah Portion Previews.

We scheduled three 90-minute Zoom interactive discussions for 2023, each held on Sundays at 12:30 PM. We begin with the changing wisdoms of the *Torah* (March 10). Then we explore the changing wisdoms of *American Jewish Thought Since 1934* (June 25). Our final session uses changing wisdoms ideas to inspire innovations in our personal and synagogue lives (October 15).
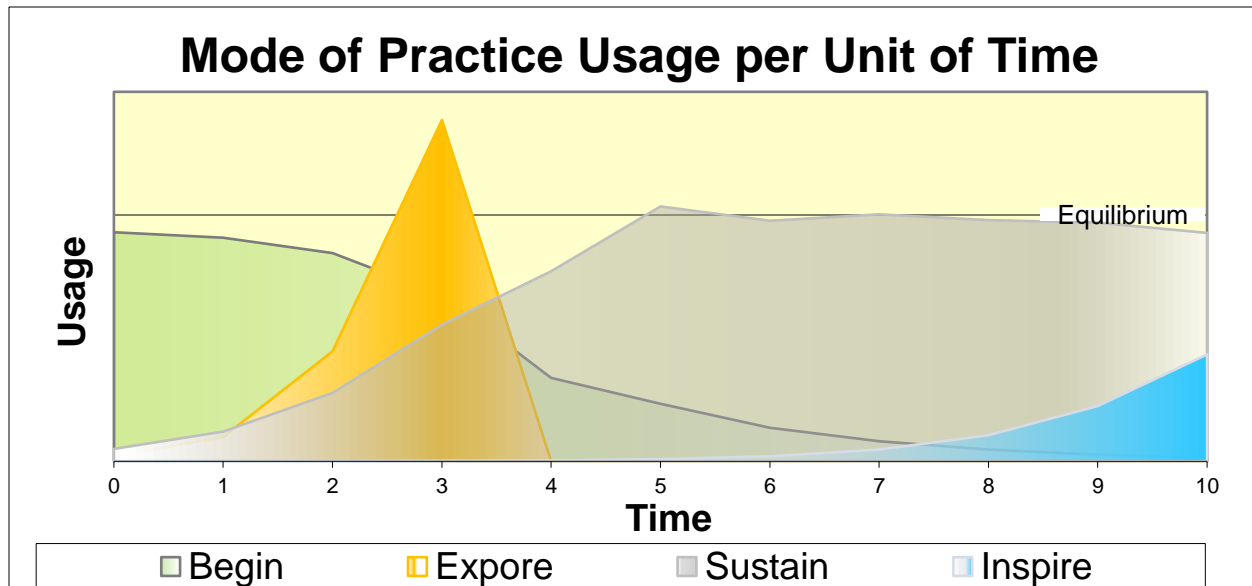
Session I. Changing Wisdoms with the Torah

Introduction

In this session participants will learn to use four *modes of practice* and two *types of learning* from research on the measurement of practices (*praxomics[i]*). Participants will learn how the practices compete like memes (and species) and how new ones develop. We will also discuss applications to the Torah of four (of the twelve) dimensions of *Developmental Rubrics for Reform Rabbis* (HUC-JIR, 2013). We conclude with a description of the *Changing Wisdoms Facilitation Project*.

Session II Changing Wisdoms with Reform Theology will add the praxomics principles of *description and scale*. It also introduces the additional *eight dimensions* of the rabbinical rubrics. We will use these to reflect on excerpts from *American Jewish Thought Since 1934* by Michael Marmur and David Ellenson.

Session III Changing Wisdoms in Jewish Life will introduce methods like developmental interviewing for creating new developmental dimensions. We apply praxomics and both new and rabbinical dimensions to personal and synagogue life.

Modes of Practice

Mode of Practice Usage per Unit of Time

Usage (y-axis) vs Time (x-axis: 0–10)

Equilibrium

Legend: ☐ Begin   ☐ Expore   ☐ Sustain   ☐ Inspire

		Modes of Practice			
		Begin	**Explore**	**Sustain**	**Inspire**
Competition Parameters	**Social Prevalence**	Very common	Unlikely	Rare	Extremely rare
	Growth	No growth	Very Rapid	Moderate	Moderate
	Competitive Strength	None	Very little	Moderate	Very much
	Depletion	Rejection	Evil	Boredom	None

Types of Learning

I. Iterative Learning

Improve the speed and accuracy of performing any mode of practice through deliberate repetition.

II. Transformative learning

Acquire a new, more complex mode of practice through four **DEEP** *commitments.*

Dilemmas initiate change by detecting a disorienting event

Examination identifies a new mode by reflecting, assessing self, and sharing.

Enabling it requires collaboration to planning, rehearsal, and empowerment.

Performing it happens in communities of practice.

Dimensions of Developmental Rubrics for Reform Rabbis

		Modes of Practice			
		Beginning	**Exploring**	**Sustaining**	**Inspiring**
Dimensions	**Interpret Texts**	*Literal* Read at face value.	*Preconceived* Seek data fitting their preconceptions.	*Purposeful analysis* Read for inspiration and identify important ideas.	*Combined frames* Combine lenses, connect texts, expand boundaries, reframe, and apply to new contexts.
	Understand Contexts	*Decontextualized* Disconnected from knowledge of the past.	*Influential surroundings* Read and describe influential surroundings in space and time, ± a few centuries.	*Cultural climate* Describe the writer's culture including time, place, community, ideology, economic situation, liturgy, and use of Jewish texts.	*Intertwined histories* Connect multiple concepts through the ages simultaneously.
	Organize	*Join* Try to join a community.	*Conceptualize* Identify key concepts of institutional systems, processes, organizational behavior.	*Effect change* Effect change using leadership, vision and organizational best practices.	*Build community* Gradually impart to congregations a vision of building community by drawing people into meaningful Jewish life.
	Cultivate Jewish Identity	*Parochial* Accept those like them. Uncomfortable with people changing in ways that challenge themselves.	*Presupposing* Recognize others' humanity but try to make them more like themselves.	*Facilitating* Listen attentively to others' spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs. Stitch together Jewish social relations.	*Regenerating* Contribute to others' transformations with empathy, authenticity and sensitivity to group and community dynamics.

Changing Wisdoms Facilitation Project

Goal: Frequently use Changing Wisdoms Ideas to suggest Innovations for advancing the purpose and offerings of Temple Adas Shalom

- Our purpose is to build a strong and vibrant Jewish Community, providing for the spiritual well-being of our members today, and the foundation for the Jewish community in this region in the future.

- We offer a friendly and relaxed environment for all Jewish and interfaith families. The wide range of programs and activities provide many opportunities to add meaning to our lives and share pleasant experiences with friends and neighbors of the Jewish community.

Project Structure

- When: Beginning March 12 and Ending October 29, weekly at noon on Monday or Tuesday.

- Who: Group members are anyone who attended Session I and wants to participate (if others want to join but missed the session, David Dirlam will repeat it with them).

- What: Zoom meeting and email at any time on synagogue development ideas. David Dirlam will send out a starter message and any other group members who want to try something would be welcomed. Responses from (all hopefully) group members either in the Zoom session or at their leisure on email.

Follow-ups by David Dirlam edited by group

- Monthly email summarizing ideas, responses, and action items

- Summary provided for discussion in Session III on October 15

- Summary recommendations sent to TAS President by October 29

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