



*Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul*

## PARADIGMS

B.S.D.

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Paradigms are a set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality. They are our core beliefs, our mental filter through which we view the world and make meaning of our experience. They are the culmination of our nature and nurture - they make up the sum total of who we are today. Paradigms are our map of reality - we do not see the world as it is, we see it as defined by our paradigms.

If a person is trying to find his way around New York, with a map of Detroit, determination, persistence and discipline will not assist him. Even strategic thinking and a keen sense of judgment will not aid his endeavors. His increased efforts will only result in more frustration and anxiety.

Breaking through the pain to a lasting solution will require an understanding of the fundamental problems causing the pain. Since our problem lies in behavior, that flows out of an incomplete or deeply flawed paradigm of human nature, the solution will require a fundamental break with old ways of thinking.

At one time or another, we all wrestle with the question, "what is life about?" Having no clear answer, and not believing an answer exists - we define our lives and our reality, based on our subjective core beliefs that make up our paradigm.

There are some people that believe life is a deck of cards. That we are just pawns in a world that lacks rhyme or reason. Unable to shape our destiny we become cynical, bitter and dissatisfied. This mindset of feeling negative, victimized and hopeless, is called the 'FEAR PARADIGM.'

To others, life is a game. To them, the main thing is to have fun. Always looking for a new form of entertainment - from movies, sports, and vacations to the latest electronic gadgets, there are a myriad of distractions guaranteed to numb the heart and mind. This mindset, where distractions become necessities, is called the 'PLEASURE PARADIGM.'

Then there are others that experience life as a treadmill. To these people, life is about burden and responsibility. Lacking a high level of self-esteem, these people are always looking to conform to other people's expectations. Life becomes dull, boring and lifeless, as routine occupies center stage. This mindset, where we submit to rules, play it safe, and life lacks spirit, is called the 'DUTY PARADIGM.'

Others believe that life is a marathon. To these people, the only thing that counts is coming in first. These people pursue success at all cost. Characterized by discipline, hard work, and goal directed activities, these people keep running, content to crush all those who stand in their way or neglecting those that need them most, all the while feeling justified because life is a marathon. This mindset, where life is good when we perform well, is called the 'ACHIEVEMENT PARADIGM.'

Once in a while, life gives us a break from our chosen metaphor. It is during these quiet moments, that we sense a void in our lives - that something is missing, even though we don't quite know what it is. We feel lonely, restless and confused. Not knowing what to do or where to turn, we immerse ourselves back into our chosen metaphor, hoping it will provide us with the relief we so desperately seek. Instead of embracing this emptiness and using it as a springboard to find truth and inner meaning, we cover it up with our favorite metaphor as life passes us by.

From the Torah's perspective, life is not about what we amass, but what we give; it is not having more, but being more; for in the end our lives our judged not by the businesses, houses and portfolios that we built, but by the lives we touched.



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Once this realization becomes part of our psyches, our entire attitude towards life will be altered. Instead of being consumed by competitiveness, serenity will set in, a serenity that will enable us to say thank you for the life we have been given.

This mindset, where we are alive and happy, where we believe in ourselves, yet care deeply about others, where our strength and inner moral compass allow us to be bigger than the circumstances and challenges of our lives, where we subordinate our lower self in order to do what is right, and where the world feels like a good and friendly place to live is called the 'INTEGRITY PARADIGM.'