Shifting Paradigms is an intriguing and critical part of the maturation process. Whether it is a major scientific revolution as described in Thomas Kuhn’s classic work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, or a small change in eating habits as Kurt Lewin documented in his early studies, the phenomenon has always evoked a sort of intense curiosity and idiosyncratic fascination.

This essay describes a paradigm shift that has had a major impact on my personal orientation and career. This shift has to do with my evolving perspective on conflict and peacemaking. The specific pieces which led to this shift derived from what I call my Middle East odyssey.

I grew up in a U. S. and Mormon culture that strongly identified with the house of Israel (of which Mormons considered themselves a part) and the Jewish settlement of the land of Palestine. The part of Latter-day Saint theology that classifies us as part of the tribes of Israel seemed to be more important when I was in my youth than it is now. I felt an unconscious link to these current children of Israel returning to their promised land. Our many hymns with the terms Israel and Zion also imply this direct connection. I clearly remember the stirring words of General Authorities (especially Elder LeGrand Richards) regarding the last days and the significance of the creation of the state of Israel. The Church’s sporadic attempts to proselyte in Jewish communities (especially in Los Angeles and New York City) generated a different kind of excitement. I experienced some of that challenging, but not very productive, effort in Pittsburgh, New York, and Washington, D.C. while I served in the Eastern States Mission from 1955 to 1957. Although preaching the gospel to the Jews was seen as a prelude to the fulfillment of prophesy, I felt that neither the Jewish community nor the missionaries were ready. However, I still often heard the statement that we cannot be against God’s plans and the prophesies of the last days. While some clearly felt that the last days were upon us, others of us felt that the time was in the distant future.

In addition to a theological connection, many of us identified strongly with the development of Jewish national identity through the formation of the state of Israel. I recall watching the vivid Saturday afternoon movie newsreels showing the horrors of the Holocaust and the glorious victories of the Allied forces in World War II. Like many others with Judeo-Christian sentiments, I assumed that the European Jews deserved a homeland; I didn’t realize the cost of displacing those long-term inhabitants of Palestine. I recall the excitement when President Truman gave immediate official recognition to the new state of Israel announced by David Ben Gurion, on 14 May 1948. All of the people I knew, and the limited news I listened to, strongly supported the creation of the state of Israel and this diplomatic recognition. We perceived the immediate declaration of war by the surrounding Arab states to be just an unfortunate interruption in the big picture. And, of course, we viewed the Arabs as the bad guys in a predetermined drama.

The world of art (music, literature, and film) added power to the story we held uncritically. Works such as the best-selling *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, first published in 1947, and, *Exodus*, the 1958 novel by Leon Uris, enlisted support for the fledgling nation and induced guilt for the Western world’s failure to support the tragic victims of Nazi oppression. These
I strongly admired what I regarded as the Israeli forces’ brilliant strategy during the “Six-Day War” in 1967 (viewed more critically by contemporary Israeli historians). One of my graduate school colleagues during that time was a reserve officer in the Israeli Army. He answered his call to active duty but arrived in Israel after the brief war was over. When he returned to Berkeley, he helped me understand why Moshe Dayan had become an immediate and symbolic hero. I also recall political cartoons of that time criticizing U.S. involvement in Vietnam and suggesting that Israel lend Moshe Dayan to the U.S. in order to save us from our bungling military strategy.

With this background, including a firmly constructed American-Mormon cosmology, I was barely prepared to even consider a different perspective on the Middle East. Three events dramatically changed my simple and limited paradigm.

THE FIRST STAGE in my transition came from a chance encounter one fall day in 1981 when I was walking down the hall from my office in the Kimball Tower at BYU. I passed my friend and colleague, Omar Kader, who said he was going to Jerusalem at Thanksgiving time to take care of some family business. He surprised me by asking if I would like to go with him. I had always been interested in travel and thought the Holy Land would be an interesting tourist destination (although the sacred sites made it a little more compelling). I realized that Omar knew the territory well, and since I hate to go on organized tours and am also temperamentally predisposed to respond to spontaneous opportunities, I said, “Sure, I’d like to go.” It was only a two-minute encounter, and, to be honest, I promptly forgot about our discussion. Two weeks before the Thanksgiving holiday, I received a call from Clark’s Travel Agency saying that they had a round-trip ticket for me from Salt Lake to Tel Aviv and asking me how I wanted to pay for it. At that point, I realized that Omar had been serious about this adventure, and I decided I should start to prepare.

My original impression of the Holy Land surprised me. I’ll never forget the drive from Ben Gurion airport to Jerusalem. Seeing road signs with directions to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jericho had a powerful impact. I realized I was someplace special and should start to pay close attention. That first night, as we wandered through the streets of the Old City, I realized there was no place like this, and I needed to know—do, understand, experience—more. The “holy” places (Church of the Nativity, Garden Tomb, Garden of Gethsemane, and so forth) impacted me both positively and negatively. I was moved by the power of the events which had happened there but slightly put off by the commercial aspect and the jurisdictional battles between different Christian sects for control of some of the sites.

However, while I knew about the religious context of Jerusalem, my most powerful experiences on the trip came from learning and observing something entirely new. We watched a Palestinian home just south of Jerusalem being blown up by Israeli Defense Forces because a child had thrown a rock at an Israeli jeep. It had been a beautiful old Jerusalem limestone building, and now it was in shambles. Three generations had been living in the family home, including several small children. They had been given a one-hour warning in which to remove as many things as possible. The family was gathered in the yard with a little furniture and some personal items scattered around. The Red Crescent (the Islamic counterpart to the Red Cross) was setting up a tent for them to sleep in. They could not get a permit to rebuild, and if they left the land, they would forfeit ownership. The frustration and tragedy were seen in their voice and demeanor, as they could see no “legitimate” strategy for the future. That was the beginning of my paradigm shift. After returning home, I often thought about my encounter. I read a few books and listened more critically to the news, but I had no specific agenda for future action.

THE SECOND EVENT leading to my eventual paradigm shift came in 1989 when I was invited to become a visiting scholar at the newly completed BYU Jerusalem Center for Near East Studies. My research agenda there would be to study Arab and Israeli management and to conduct leadership development programs. I was considering the opportunity but had not yet decided to go. There were several negatives—kids in school, administrative and academic assignments for the next year, consulting commitments, and the logistics of taking a family to Jerusalem for a year. In the midst of the uncertainty, I was invited to a “meeting” to discuss the opportunity with BYU’s Academic Vice President, Bill Evenson. The meeting turned out to be in Salt Lake City and included President Howard W. Hunter (then president of the Quorum of the Twelve), Elder James E. Faust, and Elder Jeffery R. Holland (then a member of the Seventy and also president of BYU). After very little small talk, President Hunter said, “I understand you are going to
Jerusalem.” I said I had not yet decided, but it sounded interesting. He responded, “Can you decide now?” I asked why, and he said, “You need to go and build bridges to the Palestinians.”

In addition to President Hunter’s bridge-building metaphor and challenge, he cited a scripture for my consideration. He said the following verses from Isaiah might provide a little different perspective:

In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (Isaiah 19:23–25).

While not being too specific, President Hunter said there would be a period of peace prior to the Second Coming and that we should be part of creating that peace. He suggested that we should look at possibilities for cooperation rather than accept the “inevitable” conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors (especially Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinians). This was during 1989—the height of the first Intifada (the uprising of Palestinian youth against the Israeli occupation). There was considerable instability in the region, and even Jordan was still technically at war with Israel. President Hunter said there would be peace treaties and economic and political development and interdependence prior to the last days. He said that many things still needed to happen prior to the Second Coming, and he referred to a speech he had given years before at BYU, “All Are Alike unto God.” In that speech, he stated:

As members of the Lord’s church, we need to lift our vision beyond personal prejudices. We need to discover the supreme truth that indeed our Father is no respecter of persons. Sometimes we unduly offend brothers and sisters of other nations by assigning exclusiveness to one nationality of people over another.

Let me cite, as an example of exclusiveness, the present problem in the Middle East—the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews. We do not need to apologize nor mitigate any of the prophecies concerning the Holy Land. We believe them and declare them to be true. But this does not give us justification to dogmatically pronounce that others of our Father’s children are not children of promise. . . . Sometimes they [members of the Church in the Muslim world] are offended by members of the Church who give the impression that we favor only the aims of the Jews. The Church has an interest in all of Abraham’s descendants, and we should remember that the history of the Arabs goes back to Abraham through his son Ishmael. . . .

A cabinet minister of Egypt once told me that if a bridge is ever built between Christianity and Islam it must be built by the Mormon Church. In making inquiry as to the reason for his statement I was impressed by his recitation of the similarities and the common bonds of brotherhood.

Both the Jews and Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. We have love for and an interest in each. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order.

Of course, we moved to Jerusalem. During the year, I had an opportunity to get acquainted with many Palestinian political, academic, and business leaders. I learned about their strong commitment to family and about the threats to the family posed by both the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Intifada. I learned that many families were afraid to have their children come to America for higher education because the U.S. is such a violent culture. I learned that most of them clearly want peace, but peace with dignity.

That experience taught me I needed to learn even more and needed to make additional contributions to building peace. I also became acquainted with Amer and Rebecca Salti in Amman, Jordan. They had met as students at BYU and had become business and community leaders in Jordan. Their efforts in economic and political development opened more doors for me to learn and serve in Jordan. Following up on these connections, I accepted academic appointments teaching at BirZeit University in Palestine and at the University of Jordan. I spent two different semesters at each of these institutions learning from students and helping students deal with organizational complexities. I also was fortunate to teach a term at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy.

THE THIRD STAGE of my shift came in the fall of 1992 when I traveled with Omar Kader to Tunis to spend several days with Yasser Arafat and the executive committee of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO leadership was interested in discussing the recent U.S. elections. I was impressed by their familiarity with our government structure and philosophy and with particular individuals in the incoming Clinton administration. I was also surprised to learn how many PLO leaders had been educated in the U.S. and had children living there. The PLO was preparing for the Oslo negotiations with Israel, and we discussed various strategies they might pursue in the future with the U.S., Israel, and the Arab states. At dinner that night, Suha Arafat (who had only recently married the PLO leader) told me,

Since 1964, Yasser has been married to the PLO. Now he is married to me, and we are going to have children. Those children must grow up in peace in a Palestinian state. Therefore, it is time to get on with the peace process.

Certainly, many other factors were relevant in the impetus for peace negotiations—the breakup of the Soviet Union, the
Gulf War, the election of Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister of Israel—but the vision of Palestinian children growing up in peace in Palestine provided a very compelling motivation. One PLO officer told me that, “In the past, it was unacceptable to advocate peace; now it is unacceptable not to.”

Although I did not realize it, Suha Arafat was pregnant at the time of our conversation. So her perspective had a powerful and very personal imperative. And the vision of reconciliation for the children became especially poignant a few months later when she gave birth to a daughter, Zahwa. The press announcements heralded, “The Tiniest Diplomat,” “And Baby Makes Peace,” and “Having a Baby Warms Relations with Rabin.” The image has enormous power. Despite the hard-line warriors on both sides who are willing to hold out until all their demands are satisfied, the vision of Palestinian children who need love, an education, a stable home, and a world “safe for play” calls for the ultimate in work and sacrifice.6

A telling example of these experiences came after the 9/11 destruction, when many former students from Jordan and Palestine sent emails to my wife and me expressing their sorrow for the terrorist attacks. One student said that Lois and I were the only Americans he knew, and he just had to tell us that the terrorists did not represent him nor the Arab and Muslim world of which he is a part. The ongoing love and affection shared with these students and other contacts in many parts of the Middle East have become one of the most satisfying aspects of my professional career.

These events gradually convinced me that I (and we) should be actively working for peace, that the conflict is not inevitable, and the end of the world is not imminent. I experienced a major change of heart. I certainly do not hold a view in which I can justify terrorist activity, but I do understand the frustration and desperation that may lead to such behavior. More important, I recognize the failure of policies (repeated many times in history) that do not treat people with dignity nor address genuine human needs. The long-term corruption of human values and the cost of inhumanity is so great to both the oppressor and oppressed that I have become convinced that the world needs a different paradigm for dealing with differences and with conflict.

THE PEACEMAKING SHIFT

The foregoing describes how the transition in my personal perspective occurred. I developed a corresponding theoretical perspective through long years of intellectual inquiry and struggle, plus a variety of on-the-ground experiences.

One high-impact experience came while serving as an army officer in Germany when the Berlin Wall went up. We prepared to go to war, and without consciously intending to do so, I found myself turning the enemy (Soviet Union and East Germany) into animals in order to justify killing them. I realized how easy it is to depersonalize those who are different—

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**International Peacebuilding** describe how a fundamental Christian commitment can be translated into a proactive, early intervention strategy instead of one which simply tries to put out fires after the city is half-burned.

Lederach helped me construct an evolving framework for thinking about conflict. I had originally thought in terms of the inevitability of conflict and the need to suppress its manifestation. This suppressive kind of conflict resolution is often imposed by those with the power to dictate conditions, and it is often accomplished with military or police force. While the objective may genuinely be to make the world better, often the reality is just to make things “look good,” to give the illusion of a peaceful environment. Most often, no improvement occurs in the fundamental conditions that gave rise to the original tensions.

A paradigm of peacemaking allows us to develop strategies that empower rather than manipulate, and help us love rather than use others.

I came to recognize that although this conflict resolution strategy comes late in the process, it is often the only option. When individuals or groups reach a genuine impasse, or when violence within a society or between nations seems to be irreversible, we do need creative strategies for bringing the parties to a negotiating table or sometimes even to impose a solution by force. However, this very realization also means we should try harder to find alternative paradigms for thinking about and dealing with conflict.

The next step in my evolving paradigm shift came as I moved from a conflict resolution approach to a strategy of conflict management. This philosophy holds that because of diverse and conflicting interests, many differences will not go away and perhaps can never be resolved. So we learn to live with the differences. We “manage” the conflict, realizing that we must develop an understanding which takes into account limited resources and divergent demands, and that we need to introduce institutional mechanisms for dealing with these unresolvable conflicts. In this approach, we try to prevent the outbreak of overt conflict, but often this approach still does not confront the underlying sources of the tension. Hence, we need to become more than managers; we need to become peacemakers.

I find it curious to realize how often I read or quote scriptures without realizing their implications for my behavior in a great number of different settings. The following scriptural passages remind me of my responsibility to explore ways and avenues in which they should impact my behavior:

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5:9).

And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfection and peace (D&C 88:125).

And again I say unto you, sue for peace, not only to the people who have smitten you, but also to all people; And lift up an ensign of peace and make a proclamation of peace unto the ends of the earth (D&C 105:38–39).

In an attempt to translate some of the Savior’s injunctions and my own experience into a viable strategy for action, I moved from attempts to resolve conflict, to managing conflict, and then to a philosophy of peacemaking.

WHEN ACCEPTING THE challenge of peacemaking, at whatever stage of an existing conflict, our first concern is to address the people and conditions that cause the tensions, frustrations, or inequality. The goal should be to understand first, before passing any judgment. While all problems cannot be eliminated or managed to everyone’s satisfaction, we must overcome the arrogance and hubris that lead to abuse of power. We as Latter-day Saints are warned against practicing “unnrighteous dominion”—and that warning is given to those who are supposedly fulfilling priesthood responsibility! The failure to be a peacemaker (to exercise unrighteous dominion) is often an unintentional act on the part of leaders. We often provoke unnecessary conflict by default rather than by intent.

The challenge and opportunity of peacemaking is to engage in a teaching and development process that reflects our own moral commitment to peace while at the same time providing a means for helping others to achieve that same objective. Since all systems have human and institutional imperfections, any effort will fall short to a degree, but the ultimate criterion and commitment must be clear.

In my work, I have defined the criteria for effective peacemaking as follows:

1. **A commitment to providing accurate information.** It is critical that the constituent population have adequate education, decision-making ability, and access to relevant and valid information. There also must be a culture that values honest information sharing and debate. If these conditions do not exist to begin with, they must be developed.

2. **Mechanisms for justice.** Whatever a new system is created, it must provide just solutions to problems. Moral laws and rules must be enforced, and citizens must be able to trust in those who administer the laws. If these conditions do not exist, the peacemaker must help people understand their necessity and engage in the task of creating them.

3. **A culture of human dignity.** There must be a commitment to creating a culture in which all people are seen as having equal dignity and worth. Mistakes
must be seen as human failures rather than the result of evil intent. This is especially difficult in settings marked by generations of mistrust and where the existence of evil conspiracies is simply assumed. One of the sad realities is that this assumption may be true in some contexts. In this case, one of the peacemaker’s greatest challenges is to facilitate change in both the current reality and the perceptions.

4. A philosophy and reality of freedom. There must be reasonable access to education, jobs, and political power. People must feel free to think, speak, assemble, and worship as they desire. In the attempt to export freedom and democracy, we have to realize that liberty must precede democracy. Without the values and reality of liberty, ostensibly democratic processes usually produce negative results.

5. The value of reconciliation. There must be a commitment to explaining another’s point of view to his or her satisfaction and a willingness to forgive past ills. Vengeance cannot belong to the individual, the tribe, or even the state. Punishment may be enforced by the state, and God may exact an eternal measure of judgment; but for the peacemaker and the community served, reconciliation must be seen as essential if there is to be any long-term peace.

6. Transcendent metaphors. People need to share higher values than simple personal power. The sad reality is that many of the same forces that provide transcendent metaphors (such as family, theology, nation, and political philosophy) can be twisted by zealots or extremists into concepts that justify initiating or perpetuating violence. Peacemakers need to work hard and creatively in order to keep such people from hijacking higher values.

The power of transcendent metaphors is easily seen in the Palestinian setting. Distributive strategies for resources (money, land, power) are usually difficult and divisive, but the metaphor—and reality—of considering the children can help to overcome our inadequate efforts to achieve a perfect organization.

I have found the following hierarchy of relationship metaphors to be helpful in getting adversaries to the necessary level of understanding. As people see themselves developing higher levels of commitment to others (similar to moving from an ethics of “an eye for an eye . . .” to one of “turning the other cheek”), both strategy and behavior change considerably.

1. Fights. The objective is to employ whatever means to destroy the other party.
2. Games. The objective is to compete and win within the rules of the game.
3. Debates. You argue and discuss in order to convert the other party.
4. Love. You care enough about the other party to want what is best for them.

5. Children. You love, serve, and sacrifice in order to make the world better for your children and for all of the world’s children.

Each of these levels has its own criteria for judging the quality and substance of a relationship. When one is preoccupied with winning a war, game, argument, or election, it is very easy to dehumanize the other party. The challenge is to find the humanity in those who may not share our vision of the world. Too often we are trapped in a lower-level metaphor when the person in need—a friend, spouse, child, subordinate, student, minority, ethnic or religious group—is in need of love and care. We find ourselves competing in a self-defined conflict when they are crying for love, understanding, and help.

A paradigm of peacemaking allows us to develop strategies that empower rather than manipulate, and help us love rather than use others. I have found this especially true during my experiences in the Middle East, but, of course, these principles are also applicable in a general context. I like the simple line, attributed to President Spencer W. Kimball, that “We should love people and use things, not use people and love things.” That is a transcendent truth worthy of the best peacemaker.

As I have struggled in my odyssey to develop new metaphors and to work out of a peacemaking paradigm, I find that I think and behave differently in both my private and professional roles. I have not overcome all of my old or instinctual motivations, but I am aware of their cost for me and for those I work with. Acknowledging that sometimes “we talk better than we act,” I am still impressed and touched by those, primarily in the Middle East, who report that they are better able to handle the old conflicts and avoid new ones as a result of our efforts. Paradigms and the criteria we use to judge between values may be hard and painful to change; but human dignity, religious duty, and world progress demand that we try. Mohandas Gandhi said, “We must first become the change we want to see in others.” When we accomplish that change, we have at least changed one person, and hopefully someone else, and perhaps the world. This is the essence of peacemaking, and striving to be proactive in applying its values is worth our best effort.

NOTES

6. While subsequent developments in the Middle East have been sadly disappointing, the image and tragic reality of children suffering in Israel, Palestine, and Iraq has reinforced the critical importance of working for peace, as well as the high cost of failure of individuals and institutions.