

The Audacity of Creation

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This has been a euphoric week for the Jewish people.

Though grief for the hostages who never came home remains part of our emotional landscape, the return of those who are still alive—and the ceasefire—has brought deep relief and joy.

As recently as a month ago, no one saw this coming.

Not a single Middle East expert predicted that Hamas would release all the hostages at once. The hostages were their leverage, everyone said; they would never let them go while IDF troops were still in Gaza—if ever.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, President Trump announced that a global coalition had agreed to a plan forcing Hamas to release them immediately.

And then—Hamas actually did it.

It felt like the rules of the world were being rewritten before our eyes.

Israeli journalist Ari Shavit said as much this week on the Call Me Back podcast.

The key to the agreement, he said, was the Trump team's unconventional diplomacy. Because President Trump, Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner aren't trained diplomats, they weren't bound by the "conventional wisdom" that governs the field.

See, every profession develops its own conventional wisdom—assumptions and rules of thumb that become "the way it's done."

Law students learn the same methods for arguing cases. Diplomats learn the same principles for managing conflict. Those patterns get reinforced throughout their careers.

And one iron rule of American diplomacy is: You never sit down with terrorists. Doing so legitimizes them and strengthens their hands.

That principle would normally have been a deal-breaker, because Hamas demanded a face-to-face assurance from someone who could speak directly for the president. No conventional diplomat would have done it.

But Trump's team, untrained as they are in those norms, agreed to meet with Hamas and give the assurance they sought.

Breaking the rule everyone else followed turned out to be the key to getting the deal done.

Here's the lesson I take from it: Sometimes, the only way to change the world—or your life—is to stop doing things the way they've always been done.

Tradition and expertise are valuable, of course, but they can also trap us in patterns that no longer serve us. It takes courage—and sometimes audacity—to do things differently.

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Judaism itself was born from that kind of audacity.

In the Ancient Near East, every culture had its own creation story. Nearly all of them described a violent struggle among the gods that birthed the world.

In the Babylonian myth, the god Marduk kills Tiamat and fashions the world from her corpse. The Canaanites believed the storm-god Baal subdued Mot, the god of death. The Hittites imagined a chain of divine overthrows before cosmic order finally emerged.

In all of them, creation was born from conflict.

The Torah, by contrast, begins with a quiet revolution. One God—alone and unchallenged—creates the world not through violence but through speech: “Let there be light.”

The world unfolds through harmony, not chaos; no blood, no war, no rival gods—just order, beauty, and purpose.

That vision was radically new.

It declared that peace, not struggle, is the foundation of existence. Judaism rejected the conventional wisdom of its time and imagined something higher.

And that may still be the challenge of our time: to break through our inherited assumptions about what’s possible.

For decades, conventional wisdom said Israel and the Palestinians were locked in a zero-sum conflict destined to last forever.

Yet this week, in a moment that seemed impossible, Israel, the Arab and Muslim countries, Europe, and the U.S. agreed to work together to end the war and rebuild Gaza for the Gazan people.

Whether this deal holds or not, it has already shattered the myth that there’s no common ground between Israel and the Muslim world. They may never find it in history or religion, but it turns out they can rally around stability and shared prosperity.

Like Genesis itself, this agreement suggests that peace can be forged by daring to ignore conventional wisdom and look at things from a different angle.

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What if we applied that lesson to our own lives?

Where are you stuck doing the same thing year after year, expecting change but finding none?

How often do you cling to “the right way,” long after it’s stopped working?

Maybe the wisdom you inherited from parents, mentors, or experience isn’t serving you anymore.

Maybe the path forward requires doing something that feels wrong at first—something your old self would never have tried.

But the good news is: Nothing about “the way it’s always been” is written in stone.

You can start again. You can create your world differently.

Our parashah this week, B’reishit, means “in the beginning.” Every new beginning, global or personal, starts when someone dares to imagine that the story could unfold another way.

As the musical Godspell puts it:

When your trust is all but shattered,
When your faith is all but killed,
You can give up bitter and battered,
Or you can slowly start to build—
A beautiful city.

God, help us find the courage to believe that even in the deepest darkness, creative breakthroughs are always possible.