IV. The Unending War: 1948 to the Present – The Modern State of Israel

1948 – Proclamation of the State of Israel

At eight o’clock on the morning of May 14, 1948, the British lowered the Union Jack in Jerusalem. By mid-afternoon full-scale fighting had erupted throughout the country. At 4:00pm the Jewish population, except for Jerusalem, which was without electricity, heard the proclamation ceremonies as they were broadcast from the Tel Aviv Museum. Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel. It notified the world that the Land of Israel was the historic birthplace of the Jewish people. Immediately after adopting the Declaration of Independence the Council of State unanimously passed an ordinance abolishing the White Paper of 1939.
DECLARATION OF ISRAEL’S INDEPENDENCE
Tel Aviv, May 14, 1948 (5th of Iyar, 5708)

The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their father; and regain their statehood. In recent decades they returned in masses. They reclaimed the wildness, revived their language, built cities and villages and established a vigorous and ever-growing community with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace yet were ever prepared to defend themselves. They brought the blessing of progress to all inhabitants of the country.

In the year 1897 the First Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodor Herzl’s vision of the Jewish State, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and reaffirmed by the Mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and their right to reconstitute their National Home.

The Nazi holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the urgency of the re-establishment of the Jewish state, which would solve the problem of Jewish
homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations.

The survivors of the European catastrophe, as well as Jews from other lands, proclaiming their right to a life of dignity, freedom and labor, and undeterred by hazards, hardships and obstacles, have tried unceasingly to enter Palestine.

In the Second World War the Jewish people in Palestine made a full contribution in the struggle of the freedom-loving nations against the Nazi evil. The sacrifices of their soldiers and the efforts of their workers gained them title to rank with the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a Resolution for the establishment of an independent Jewish State in Palestine, and called upon the inhabitants of the country to take such steps as may be necessary on their part to put the plan into effect.

This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their independent State may not be revoked. It is, moreover, the self-evident right of the Jewish people to be a nation, as all other nations, in its own sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY, WE, the members of the National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the Zionist movement of the world, met together in solemn assembly today, the day of the termination of the British mandate for Palestine, by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and of the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

HEREBY PROCLAIM the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine, to be called ISRAEL.

WE HEREBY DECLARE that as from the termination of the Mandate at midnight, this night of the 14th and 15th May, 1948, and until the setting up of the duly elected bodies of the State in accordance with a Constitution, to be drawn up by a Constituent Assembly not later than the first day of October, 1948, the present National Council shall act as the provisional administration, shall constitute the Provisional Government of the State of Israel.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion; will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew Prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementation of the Resolution of the Assembly of November 29, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the Economic Union over the whole of Palestine.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its State and to admit Israel into the family of nations.

In the midst of wanton aggression, we yet call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the State, with full and equal citizenship and due representation in its bodies and institutions – provisional or permanent.

We offer peace and unity to all the neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all.

Our call, goes out the Jewish People all over the world to rally to our side in the task of immigration and development and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations – the redemption of Israel.

With trust in Almighty God, we set our hand to this Declaration, at this Session of the Provisional State Council, in the city of Tel Aviv, on this Sabbath eve, the fifth of Iyar, 5708, the fourteenth day of May, 1948.

David Ben-Gurion
Daniel Auster
Rachel Cohen
David Zvi Pinkas
Mordukhai Bezalel
Aharon Zisling
Yitzchak Ben-Zvi
Rebi Kalman Kahana
Meir Kalush
Eliezer Berligne
Saadia Kobashi
Elazar Kaplan
Fritz Bernstein

Abraham Katznelson
Rabbi Wolf Gold
Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levin
Feiza Reemabiath
Meir Grabovskiy
David Remez
Yitzchak Gruenbaum
Meir David Lowenstein
Bara Reputar
Zvi Luria
Mordukhai Shatter
Dr. Abram Grunovskiy
Golda Myerson

Ben Zion Sternberg
Eliezer Dobkin
Nachum Nir
Bekkar Shirecet
Meir Wilner-Kovner
Zvi Segal
Moshe Shapira
Zerah Werkhift
Meir Skertch
Herel Vardi
Rabbi Yehuda Leib
Haschen Fishman

U. S. recognizes Israel, May 14, 1948

On May, 14 President Truman decided to extend recognition of the State of Israel. The announcement was issued at 6:10pm.
Six Arab states invade

The Arab nations had discussed the possibility of armed invasion as early as June 9, 1946. However the aims of each Arab state was different. Abdullah of Transjordan’s ambition was primarily to extend his dynasty to the Arab sector of the Holy Land; he was willing to arrange his own deal with the Jews for the rest of the country.

The Syrians were determined to seize as much as they could of northern Palestine. The Mufti’s aims were simplest of all. They were to drive the Jews out of Palestine and rule the country. The rest – Lebanon and Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia by and large were not interested in intervention.

The Arab blueprint for invasion therefore deteriorated into a loose understanding that the Iraqis would enter north-central Palestine on the flank of the Arab Legion. The Syrian brigade would enter southeast of Tiberias, while the far northern sector would be left to the Lebanese division. The Egyptians would be responsible for the southern half of Palestine.

On May, 14 Abdullah appointed himself commander in chief by virtue of his army’s recognized military superiority in the Arab world. The title was purely honorary. Coordination among the various Arab armies was nonexistent.

The Arabs would have been considerably less hesitant to invade Palestine had they known the actual state of Jewish defenses. As late as May 12 the Haganah mobilized barely 30,000 men and women. The number itself was not much smaller than the total of Arab forces on the Palestine front.

The Arab forces consisted of approximately 10,000 Egyptians, 4,500 Arab Legionnaires, 7,000 Syrians, 8,000 Iraqis, and 3,000 Lebanese. The Arab strength was concentrated primarily in much greater firepower, the Air forces at their disposal.

At the beginning of the war the Israelis had nothing

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1 Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 8, pg. 766z -- seven states invade. Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 317 -- Sachar mentions only 5 armies: Egypt, Arab Legionnaires (Transjordan), Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. He does not include the Mufti’s forces in the “Palestine front” nor are any forces from Saudi Arabia mentioned. Martin Gilbert, Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), pg. 45 -- Gilbert lists 6 armies. He does not include the Mufti’s forces as an invading army, but he does include Saudi Arabia.

2 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 317
comparable. The Jews most important resource was to be found in the dedication and military experience of their troops – not to mention the LORD. Yigael Yadin was Israel’s commander of operations. On May 14 Jewish manpower resources were critically limited and so was the supply of weapons.

On May 16, a Syrian column of 200 armored vehicles including 45 tanks moved toward the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Its target was the cluster of lush, prosperous Jewish settlements on both sides of the Jordan river. Several of these were overrun. The column then proceeded to attack Degania, the oldest kibbutz in Israel.

Without artillery, Jewish forces were helpless to block the Syrian advance. Until then the only heavy weapons that had been unloaded at Haifa were four howitzers of the type used by the French army in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Two of these ancient fieldpieces were promptly dismantled and rushed to Degania. The local commander Lieutenant Colonel Moshe Dyan, had them reassembled at the very moment the first Syrian tanks rumbled through the kibbutz perimeter. They scored a hit on the advance tank. Had the Syrians known that these two obsolete weapons represented half the arsenal of Jewish fieldguns in Israel they might have pressed the attack. Instead the armored vehicles swung around in their tracks and clattered back up the mountain road. They never returned.

The Iraqis proved only barely more effective than the Syrians. Their contingent, stationed in Transjordan near the frontier numbered 8,000 of which 3,500 were combat troops. An effort was launched to cross the Jordan river opposite Beisan the day the mandate ended. It failed. Five days later, however, a Jewish frontal attack on Jenin itself was driven back by Iraqi reinforcements. A second Jewish effort failed two days later. Remarkably the Iraqi’s were unwilling to counterattack. From then on until the truce of June 11 they simply held their earlier positions. Had they continued their offensive in the early days of the war, they might well have cut the newborn Jewish state in two. Enthusiasm for battle was noticeably lacking among the Iraqi peasant-conscripts. There were instances when the Jews found dead Iraqi gunners chained to their weapons.

The most critical battle areas of the war proved to be in the south, along the Egyptian line of invasion up the coast and in the Judean hills, where the Arab Legion laid siege to Jerusalem. Brigadier Mohammed Naguib commanded the Second Egyptian brigade. Naguib, commanding 5,000
troops, proceeded cautiously up the coastal road toward Tel Aviv. The Egyptians encountered unexpectedly stiff resistance from the isolated kibbutz of Yad Mordechai. Yad Mordechai withstood five days of intensive Egyptian shelling before being evacuated. Those 5 days tied up approximately half of Naguib’s coastal force and mauled one of his battalions so thoroughly that it had to be deactivated temporarily.

Several miles away, another kibbutz, Negba, was blocking the Egyptian advance with equally ferocious resistance. The Egyptian eventually decided to skirt the bristling farm community and Negba remained a continual threat to his flank. He moved with elaborate caution slowing his drive 16 miles from the outskirts of Tel Aviv.

At this time Yadin decided to risk a tactical offensive. On May 29 he ordered reinforcements from the Jerusalem Corridor to circle Naguib’s positions at night and attack the Egyptians from the rear. With a troop strength of barely half that of the invaders the relief force nevertheless found darkness and surprise very effective. The Egyptians were thrown into confusion by the unexpected descent upon their flank. Yadin exploited the disarray by calling a press conference and announcing that the Egyptian supply lines had been cut by “overwhelming concentrations” of Israeli troops. The “news” was immediately dispatched over the international wire services and eventually reached Cairo. As Yadin had hoped, the Egyptian high command accepted the story at face value and radioed Naguib to pull up short. The bewildered commander dutifully followed orders. Naguib’s setback proved to be the turning point of the Egyptian invasion. Tel Aviv was never in jeopardy again.

The Jewish situation in the Jerusalem area besieged by Transjordan’s Arab Legion was even more precarious. The Arabs controlled every height around the city and within it. Their fighting strength by then was nearly 4,500 armed men, while the Jews, if numerically their equal, were virtually without weapons.

The Battle for Jerusalem

On May 19 Abdullah sent his first units into the Old City. Simultaneously, an additional 2,000 Legionnaires, well equipped with artillery and commanded by British officers, moved on Jerusalem from the north and soon besieged its outlying perimeter. After 10 days of savage fighting the outnumbered Jewish troops finally managed to drive the Legion back from the point of its farthest advance at the Mea Sh’arim quarter. On May 28 the British commander, Sir John Glubb,
decided to call off the attack in the northern part of the city. Some of his companies has lost fully half their effective strength and others were unnerved by the shattering blast of homemade Jewish mortars. From this point on, the Arabs switched their offensive to Jerusalem’s southern approaches.

On May 2, under cover of a heavy Transjordanian artillery bombardment, Egyptian infantryman stormed the Kibbutz of Ramat Rachel, lying astride the entrance to southern Jerusalem. What followed was the single most furious encounter of the war. The little kibbutz change hands five times during the next four days. Soldiers pressing forward in bayonet attack often had to climb over bodies piled on top of each other. When the last attack was over the Jews – most of them former Etzel (Irgun) members – remained in control. For the moment, at least, the imminent possibility of the Arabs capturing the New City had faded.

The Jewish quarter failed to hold out. On May 28 the Jewish quarter surrendered. News of the fall of the Old City was received with profound shock by the Yishuv. The loss of the Western Wall and the Temple site was to be lamented with bitterness in the years to come. The Arabs thus far had been unable to conquer the sprawling urban complex through direct assault.

By the opening of June, nevertheless, the ability of the metropolitan area to hold out was far from certain. The prospect of mass starvation was very real. Ben-Gurion insisted that full military priority now be given to opening the Jerusalem highway. Yigdal Allon, was called down from the north on May 23 to assume strategic responsibility for the assault on Latrun, that Arab strongpoint controlling the road. New recruits had to be coopted to augment the Jewish forces, including hundreds of recent immigrants possessing no military experience or even basic training. They were rushed up by bus and taxi from Tel Aviv.

On May 25 under the operational command of Colonel Shlomo Shamir the attack was launched in a blistering desert khamsin. Despite the lack of adequate reconnaissance or artillery support the men were thrown into a direct frontal offensive. The Arab Legion’s fourth Regiment ensconced in the village heights raked the attacker with mortars and
artillery. The Jews were thrown back with heavy loss of life. During the next few days additional efforts were mounted, and each time with the same result. Latrun very nearly became the graveyard of Jewish hope for breaking the siege of Jerusalem.

A single alternative remained for opening the Jewish supply line. During the previous weeks, Colonel David Marcus, an American Jewish volunteer and West Point graduate serving as area commander for the road, had been using a path south of Latrun and Deir Ayub (The section of the road between Latrun and Deir Ayub is known as the Shaar Ha’Gai [Hebrew] pass or as the Bab el-Wad [Arabic].)\(^3\) to infiltrate troops on foot through the hills to Jerusalem. Marcus speculated that the path might be widened to enable vehicles to pass through.

With Yadins’s approval, hundreds of laborers were now summoned from Tel Aviv and immediately put to work clearing boulders and dynamiting rock sidings. The work was named the “Burma Road.” There was no opportunity for rest, even in the fiercest heat, for the United Nations truce was to come into effect on June 11. If the “Burma Road” were not completed before then, no further efforts would be permitted after the truce deadline, and Jerusalem would starve.

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\(^3\) Sylvia Mann, *This is Israel* (Herzlia, Palphot Ltd., 1993), pg. 133
On June 9, a primitive roadbed was cut through the Jerusalem mountains. The first trucks, loaded with cans of food and water, ventured out on the makeshift highway. Several hours later they entered Jerusalem, where they were greeted rapturously by the awaiting Jewish population.

The First United Nations Truce.

The idea of a truce in the fighting was introduced and endorsed by the UN Security Council on May 20. The chosen mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden arrived in Israel the following week. The Arabs were generally receptive to the idea of a truce. All fighting was to stop on June 11. The truce descended on the exhausted armies “as dew from heaven” in the words of one Israeli commander. Both sides were at the limit of their resources.

Strategically, the Arabs had gained little. The Syrians had established a bridgehead on Israeli territory, but it was a minimal one. The Arab Legion had taken the Old City, but the achievement was of questionable military importance. The Egyptians had acquired a foot hold in the Negev, but it was barren desert. Whatever pretense of a united command ever existed among Arab armies had disintegrated in the actual fighting. Abdullah, the Hashemite king had lost interest in continuing the war.

The other Arab leaders made effective use of the truce. The Iraqis increased their numbers at the front to 10,000 and added large quantities of equipment. The Syrians also
carried out an extensive recruiting campaign, as did the Egyptians. By the first week in July the number of Arab regular troops in Israel had grown from 32,000 to some 45,000.

Gravely short of manpower and weapons the fledgling Israeli arm actually was in danger of collapse on nearly every front. By the truce provisions, neither side was permitted to introduce new troops. Jerusalem was to be allowed enough food and water for a month, by not more. The Israeli high command had no intention of abiding by these conditions, which was considered suicidal. Convoys of food and medicines were rushed to Jerusalem. Mobilization was continued and increased dramatically in early July. The little armaments factory moved into full production, turning out bullets, grenades and mortar shells. Weapons were secretly unloaded at coastal sites. By then the quantity of guns and equipment had become more substantial.

On May 20 the Czechs turned over an entire military airfield to the Jews, which in the following months became Israel’s principal base in Europe for the shuttle service of arms and planes. Eventually, several Dakota transports commuted back and forth between the two nations, ferrying to Israel dismantled fighter planes, artillery pieces, armored vehicles, and lighter weapons and ammunition. Planes arrived from other countries as well, including bombers and fighters flown illegally by veterans of the Allied air forces out of Britain and the United States. Thousands of tons of ammunition, military equipment, and clothing now arrived, much of it purchased, much of it donated from Jewish sources throughout the world.

The French government, too, continued its support. Weapons were sold in large quantities to the Jews. Training, storage, and assemblage facilities were provided near French arms depots and at abandoned French air force landing strips. Airfields in Corsica were made available to planes refueling en route to Israel.

In Israel, Ben-Gurion, was determined to impose unity and discipline at all levels of the military effort. Uniforms became standard, and a differential pay scale was established for commissioned officers. During the month long truce, new recruits were given intensive training. new weapons were mastered. With 60,000 men in service and growing quantities of European and American equipment at its disposal the army was systematically transformed into a modern fighting force.

Israel offensive

As the truce period approached its end the Egyptians prepared to strike the first blow. On July 8, before the truce expired, General Naguib renewed the attack against Negba, the main cohesive element of the Israeli defense system in the south. But Negba, too, had been reinforced with heavy equipment during the truce, an now successfully hurled back repeated Egyptian assaults.

Thereupon, the Jews themselves began a limited offensive, reoccupying a number of villages in the northwestern corner of the Negev, forcing back the main Egyptian line in
the center. It soon became evident to Yadin and his staff that the Egyptians no longer represented a serious offensive threat. They would be dealt with at a more opportune time later.

In the north the Syrians were content to dig in at the captured farm settlement of Mishmar HaYarden. The presence of 2,000 Arab irregulars under Fawzi al-Qawukji in the lower Galilee mountains was a more serious potential danger. The Jews disposed of it however in a brutal week long campaign during which they overran the Arab town of Nazareth and cleared the surrounding Arab villages.

At the same time the principal Israeli military effort was concentrated in the Legion occupied Lydda-Ramle area. This area also dominated Israel’s major road junctions north-south, east-west, including the opening of the Jerusalem corridor and the country’s one major airport.

On July 9, Yigdal Allon led two of his brigades in an attack on this Arab strongpoint. In the course of a day and a night of fighting the enemy positions were completely encircled. On the 11th, Lydda and its international airport fell to Lieutenant Colonel Moshe Dyan’s mechanized infantry. The following afternoon Dayan led his column of jeeps into Ramle. Barreling through the main street at full speed, machine guns firing, Dyan’s troops sent the Legionaries fleeing. With this sledgehammer operation, the Jews eliminated any remaining Arab threat to the Tel Aviv area.

The Second UN Truce

The UN security council unanimously endorsed a second cease fire proposal on July 15 with instructions for hostilities to cease in three days. By July 18 Israel occupied far more of the land than the UN Partition Resolution had allocated, while the Arabs occupied only one Jewish settlement, Mishmar HaYarden, and the small Egyptian foothold in the Negev.

The Negev liberated

In the last days before the imposition of the second truce the Jews managed to recapture a number of villages in the northwestern corner of the Negev. Yet the majority of Negev settlements still remained under Egyptian blockade. As Yadin and his staff viewed it, strategic considerations alone would have dictated a future Israeli offensive in the desert. It was agreed that the Egyptian danger was potentially the greatest, and that priority henceforth should be given to a full-scale offensive in the Negev.

In preparation for the new offensive, Israeli transport planes ferried men and material to an airstrip carved in the northern Negev. From August until late October 1948, some 2,000 tons of equipment and 1,900 troops were carried down in this fashion. Under cover of darkness the soldiers were infiltrated into the Negev kibbutzim, until a full Israeli brigade was operating behind Egyptian lines.
During the same period, Yigdal Allon slowly moved his veteran northern brigades southward. By mid-October the young commander had 30,000 troops at his disposal on a single front, plus a small air fighter squadron. He chafed impatiently to move onto the offensive. The opportunity came on October 14.

With UN approval the Israelis set out to provision their settlements by conducting an unarmed convoy across the Egyptian controlled Faluja crossroads. The moment the column drew within sight of the farms, the lead vehicles were blown to bits. In fact, undetected by the UN observers, the Israelis themselves had dynamited the trucks.

Armed with the pretext he needed Allon went into action immediately. The speed with which he now launched his offensive was a shattering surprise for the Egyptians. Soon the major concentration of Egyptian troops in the Negev, some 35,000 men faced the possibility of defeat or entrapment near Faluja. The British introduced a resolution in the Security Council demanding yet another Palestine cease fire. The measure was adopted. During the next week of October 22, as the UN truce gradually settled on the desert, the Egyptians began evacuating units from the western Negev.

The Final Campaign of the War of Independence

As 1948 drew to a close the Jews were making preparations to attack and eradicate the Egyptian army’s last remaining garrison in Israeli territory. The purpose was to establish the irrefutable fact of Israel’s sovereign power and viability and end the war altogether. The objective became al-Auja – the anchor of the Egyptian position in the Negev Desert. If al-Auja fell, it would break the back of the Egyptian military effort.

Al-Auja was well protected by sizable Egyptian artillery and tank units. A direct assault was hardly feasible. Yadin discovered a solution in his archaeological guide to Greco-Roman Israel. An ancient Roman road ran to the south of al-Auja. Under cover of darkness, engineers repaired the most difficult stretches on this ancient route of march. The work was completed in such uncanny silence that the Egyptian outposts, less than 2 miles away, remained completely unsuspecting.

On the night of December 22 the offensive began. A column of half-tracks and troop carriers moved along the Roman road. At dawn of December 26 the Jews were within firing range of al-Auja. The Israeli’s were able to attack the defenders from behind. Although stunned the Egyptians fought back courageously. After a full day and night of close quarter fighting they surrendered. Their colonel was still in his pajamas. The surprise attack had caught him in bed.

Israel went on to conduct raids across the international border in the Sinai itself. The Jews had come farther in eight months of war than the limited distance of mere geographical advance. In May their ill armed little militia had faced Egyptian tanks only 16 miles from Tel Aviv. In December their battle seasoned troops, supported by armor
and fighter planes were driving into Egypt and cutting the last exit routs of the Egyptian army.

Help, however, came to a distraught Egypt. Under the terms of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, Britain was obliged to assist Egypt in the event of an attack from an outside party. On December 29 the Security Council ordered an immediate cease fire in Israel. It called for a permanent armistice in all sectors of the area. Now was Britain’s chance to revive its tenuous presence in the area. London chose this moment to deliver a warning. Unless Israel obeyed the Security Council resolutions, it would employ its forces in accordance with the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. The ultimatum was a chilling one. Ben-Gurion didn’t dare risk a confrontation with a Great Power. Yadin agreed, the Israeli armed forces had won too much to gamble with their victory now. On January 2, 1949, orders reached Yigdal Allon to withdraw his men from the Sinai.

The map on the following page shows the extent of Israeli penetration into Egypt. The white area inside of Egypt outlined by the dotted line and surrounding the towns of Abu Aweigila and Kusseima is the area Israel conquered and then withdrew from in the early months of 1949 (also see the legend in the lower right hand corner of the map).
THE ISRAELI WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1948-1949

Between May 1948 and January 1949, the State of Israel fought to retain its independence against the combined forces of six Arab armies. Following the initial Arab invasion, the Israelis reopened the road to Jerusalem, won control of the Coastal Plain, secured the upper Galilee, and drove the Egyptians from the Negev. But the Israelis were themselves driven from the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem (whose synagogues were desecrated and whose Jewish houses were destroyed).

During Israel's struggle for independence between November 1947 and January 1949, more than 4,000 Jewish soldiers and 2,000 civilians were killed out of a total Jewish population of only 650,000. The figures for Arab dead were not disclosed by the Arab States.

The regular forces of the neighbouring countries - with their equipment and their armaments - enjoy superiority at this time. However, evaluation of the possibilities cannot be merely a military consideration of arms against arms and units against units, since we do not have those arms or that armoured force. The problem is to what extent our men will be able to overcome enemy forces by virtue of their fighting spirit, of our planning and our tactics. YIGAEL YADIN, 31 MAY 1948
CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, ISRAELI ARMY

© Martin Gilbert

Under the control of the new State of Israel by 1 June 1948
Conquered by Israeli forces between June and November 1948
Conquered by Israeli forces between November 1948 and January 1949
Territory occupied by Israeli forces from which they withdrew during the early months of 1949
Frontiers of the State of Israel 1949-1967
1949 – Cease fire agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan, Syria

In January 1949 initial discussions opened between Israel and Egypt on the island of Rhodes. As the first step, the armistice agreement was drawn on the basis of the existing military lines. Each side assumed that the armistice would be supplanted in the near future by a permanent peace treaty. It was signed on February 24, 1949.

The precedent established at Rhodes was generally followed in subsequent negotiations between Israel and the Arab states. Once Egypt, the greatest Arab power, had agreed to a treaty with the Jews it was much less difficult for the others to follow. Agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan were all signed in less than six weeks. Syria eventually agreed to a peace agreement after endless haggling on July 20th. Iraq was the only Arab belligerent not to sign an armistice agreement directly with Israel.

The agreements left Israel in possession of approximately 8,000 square miles of land or 21% more land than allotted under the partition plan. The war had taken 6,000 lives and 5 times that many wounded – an appreciable number for a nation of less than 600,000. Military expenses had consumed nearly 500 million dollars. The land lay desolated. Many of its most productive fields lay gutted and mined. Its citrus groves, were largely destroyed. These grievous wounds notwithstanding, the little Jewish republic was alive and operating, and its statehood was an internationally accepted fact.

Israel member of the U. N.

Following the Rhodes Armistice agreements, Israel’s application for membership in the UN was approved by the Security Council on March 11, 1949. Membership itself came in May. In those days admission to the world body was considered meaningful evidence of a nation’s sovereign viability.

As the Israeli flag was ceremonially hoisted in the
plaza of the General Assembly building the Jewish world at large asked themselves whether only four years had passed since the Star of David had been identified primarily as the seal of doom worn by concentration camp inmates. The rise to independence of history’s most cruelly ravaged people transcended the experience, even the powers of description of case-hardened journalists and social scientists alike. It appeared somehow as if a new law of nature had been born.\footnote{Sachar, \textit{A History of Israel}, pg. 353}

\textbf{David Ben-Gurion prime minister}

\textbf{Chaim Weizmann first president of Israel}

\textbf{First Knesset opens}

The Israeli governmental system consists of a one chamber legislature, called a Knesset, elected by ballots cast for party lists rather than for individuals. The length of office for a Knesset is four years.

The Knesset consists of 120 seats. Each party list therefore contains names of 120 candidates. The Israeli voter has no right to strike out the name of any candidate on the list of his choice. In effect the Israeli voter votes for party ideology rather than for individuals. If a political party received 50\% of the vote they have thus won 60 seats in the Knesset, and the first 60 people on the party’s list take office. The order of listing is decided by the party’s central committee and indicated party rank as a vote getter.

The cabinet or the government is formed by the leader of the political party holding the largest number of Knesset seats. He is designated as Prime Minister and selects various ministerial colleges. However, a fundamental change occurred in the system during the election in 1996. In that election Israeli voters will begin to vote directly for the Prime Minister.
In the 18 months following the Declaration of Independence, 340,000 Jews arrived in Israel. No influx like it had been witnessed in modern times. Israel issued an "Open Door" policy for all Jews. Emotionally, the policy was dictated by the most fundamental of Zionist tenets. They extended back to the Biblical promises and forward to the commitment in the Declaration of Independence that Israel "will be open to the immigration of Jews from all countries of their dispersion."1

There was another, no less valid, explanation for the unprecedented policy. It was the government’s acute recognition of the need for an instant population. People were needed to deepen the military’s manpower reservoir, to settle the vulnerable empty spaces in the land, to start new agricultural colonies, and to create a modernized economy.

This tidal wave of immigration was by no means motivated by a pioneering spirit. The newcomers received little scrutiny or screening. The aged and the infirm, the weary and the disillusioned, flooded in indiscriminately, seeking peace and security not creative adventure.

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1 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 395
Airborne transfer of 50,000 Jews from Yemen to Israel

The Yemenites were the first to reinforce their numbers in Israel. The Imamate of Yemen, lying on the southwestern tip of the Arabian Peninsula was the home of 50,000 Jews. Concentrated in and around the capital city of Tsan’a, they traced their presence to the mass dispersion from the Holy Land after the Roman suppression. Their status as dhimmis – a barely tolerated minority – was the result of the Moslem conquest in the seventh century. Somehow they held fast to their Jewish traditions and continued to live in an unshakable expectation of the arrival of the Messiah who would lead God’s people back to the Land of Israel.

With Israel’s independence in 1948, life in Yemen suddenly became dangerous. Chagrined at the defeat of Arab forces on the battlefields of Israel, and aroused by the opportunity to loot, bands of Moslems swarmed through the Jewish quarters of Tsan’a and other towns, plundering and burning. Departure became a matter of survival.

The Jewish Agency got involved and the largest numbers of Yemenite Jews made their way on foot southward to the coast. They were then loaded on American DC-4’s and flown to Israel. At the peak of air lift, known as “Operation Magic Carpet,” planes were flying round-the-clock schedules 7-8 flight a day transporting 200 per plane load.
1950 – Western Powers guarantee existing borders in the Middle East\textsuperscript{6}

The preamble of the Rhodes armistice agreements made impressive and encouraging reading. Each stated that it was designed to facilitate the transition from truce to permanent peace. Each endorsed the Security Council injunction against the use of force and affirmed Israel’s and the Arab nations’ rights to security and freedom from attack.

However, in spite of the high sounding statements the Arab countries adopted a hostile policy toward Israel. The Arab purpose was single-minded and all-absorptive. It was flatly committed to the destruction of Israel as an independent state.

The armistice agreements were originally to be but one phase of a twofold effort under United Nations auspices to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the terms of the General Assembly Resolution of December 11, 1948, a Palestine Conciliation Commission was established and charged with three major tasks: the accomplishment of a binding peace settlement between Israel and its Arab enemies; the facilitation of measures to repatriate and resettle the Palestine refugees; the formulation of a plan to organize a permanent international regime in Jerusalem. As matters developed, the PCC failed to achieve any of these goals.

Subsequently the Arab nations adopted a four fold strategy against the young nation. The Arabs attempted to strangle Israel’s capacity to survive or grow through the use of economic boycott, blockade, diplomatic isolation, and border violence. The region was unstable and ripe for war.

The West took the first decisive action to restore stability to the Middle East. In May 1950, the United States, Britain, and France issued a declaration:

\begin{quote}
Should the three governments find that any one of these states (Israel or its Arab neighbors) contemplates violating the frontiers of armistice lines, they will ... act both within and without the framework of the United Nations in order to prevent such a violation.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

This gesture reflected Western self interest because it was primarily designed to block Soviet penetration into the region. It was, nevertheless gratefully welcomed by most Israelis.

\textsuperscript{6} Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 8, pg. 766x

\textsuperscript{7} Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 458
Law of Return

The First Knesset passed a Law of Return in July 1950, investing Jews everywhere with the legal right of immigration to Israel. In David Ben-Gurion’s words:

This is not only a Jewish state, where the majority of the inhabitants are Jews, but it is a state for all Jews, wherever they are, and for every Jew who wants to be here … This right is inherent in being a Jew.8

For all this impressive language, the Law of Return did not grant citizenship. In 1952 the Knesset passed a Nationality Law that accomplished that purpose. Under the 1952 bill, Israeli nationality might be acquired 4 ways, by immigration, birth, residence, or naturalization.

The Law of Return, likewise, failed to define the term “Jew.” The supreme court accordingly made its first effort to define this national term in the Brother Daniel (Rufeisen) case of 1958.

Oswald Rufeisen was a Polish Jew who had taken refuge in a Polish monastery during the war, became converted, and took orders as a Carmelite monk. Adopting the name Brother Daniel, Rufeisen still felt himself Jewish enough to emigrate to Israel to live and work. He claimed the right of entry under the Law of Return – that is, as recognized by nationality. When the authorities refused him entry under this category, he appealed to the courts.

According to Halachah – the Jewish Orthodox Law – Rufeisen was indeed a national (ethnic) Jew, for he was born of a Jewish mother. However, the supreme court ruled that the national term “Jew,” while ordinarily applied to many who did not practice Judaism, could not “in the language of men” be applied to anyone who voluntarily adopted another faith.

New regulations were added in 1960. Under pressure from the Orthodox Religious Parties the definition of who is a Jew was determined by Halachah – namely a person is considered a Jew if he was born of a Jewish mother, or if he had been converted to Judaism according to Orthodox procedure.

This Orthodox interpretation of nationality remained the administrative law of the land until January, 1970, when the Supreme court handed down a judgment in yet another historic case: the Benjamin Shalit case. The outcome of this case was that the Law of Return was amended to grant automatic citizenship rights to Gentile spouses, to the children of mixed marriages, even to adult descendants of mixed marriages.

8 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 383
Until the Benjamin Shalit case anyone born of a Jewish mother was considered a Jew. With the Shalit case the qualifier to the definition of “Jew” was added: “and who is not a member of another religion.” Subsequent cases have turned on this phrase.  

1978 Dorflinger case. Eileen (Esther) Dorflinger, who declared herself Jewish, was, in spite of her protests that she had not changed her religion or left the Jewish people, declared Christian by Bagatz (High Court of Justice) and refused entry under the Law of Return on the ground that she belonged to another religion. The criterion was that the “other religion,” Christianity, would, on the basis of her own statements of her beliefs and the fact of her baptism, recognize her as a member of that faith.

1989 First Beresford case. Messianic Jews Gary and Shirley Beresford were denied their appeal by Bagatz on the ground that they too were members of a religion other than Judaism, even though the State of Israel does not recognize Messianic Judaism as a religion at all. The criterion was that their faith in Yeshua as Messiah, Savior and Lord included the belief that Yeshua is the Son of God and that God consists of Father, Son and Holy Spirit – which doctrinal points are incompatible with Judaism.

1992 Second Beresford case. Bagatz reconfirmed this decision and on the same ground also rejected the appeals of the Speakman and Kendall families to immigrate under the Law of return. The Court also rejected all three families’ appeals that they be granted permanent residence under the Law of Entry, Israel’s immigration law for non-Jews. The Court stated that the Minister of the Interior had freedom to grant or not grant permanent residence under the Law of Entry with out giving reason but could not act in a discriminatory way.

**Airborne transfer of 121,000 Jews from Iraq to Israel**

The emigration from Yemen was soon followed, and ultimately surpassed by a massive airlift of Jews from Iraq. Here was the largest, oldest and most distinguished of all Eastern Jewish communities. The population numbered approximately 130,000 in 1948.

Circumstances for the Iraqi community began to go bad in the 1930’s with Arab right-wing nationalism and a pro-German government. However in 1948 and 49, during the war for independence, Iraqi Jewry entered its darkest hour. Under the cloak of martial

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law, the Baghdad government subjected the nation’s Jewish citizen’s to organized persecution. Jewish homes were searched, often pillaged. Hundreds of Jews were arrested and imprisoned under charges of treason. Jews were expelled from government, Jewish doctors and pharmacists barred from practice, Jewish students expelled from the university, Jewish banks ordered closed, and Jewish merchants denied their import licenses. The community faced economic ruin. With the outbreak of fighting in Israel emigration to Israel had been declared a capital offense.

Nevertheless, the government was intrigued by the prospect of inheriting large quantities of abandoned Jewish property. In March, 1950 the Iraqi government gave official sanction to Jewish emigration on the condition that Jews applying for exit permits relinquish their Iraqi citizenship. Iraq’s Jews applied for emigration by the tens of thousands. Baghdad granted permission for air transport.

The great airlift was dubbed “Operation Ali Baba” and was launched in May, 1950. By the time it ended in December 1951, 113,000 passengers had been flown to the Jewish state. Afterward smaller numbers of Jews reached Israel via Iran, bringing the total Iraqi immigration to 121,000.

Jordan annexes the West Bank

1951 – Second Knesset elected

Tension on borders increases

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Immigration continues

1956 – Sinai Campaign

For the better part of two decades, from the summer of 1952 until the autumn of 1970, the history of the Arab world was largely dominated by Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Nasser was the son of a post office employee in upper Egypt. Since his early youth he was active in anti-British causes. The indignity of British rule was compounded by military defeat in Palestine at the hands of the Jews.

For Nasser and other military officers of his generation, the Palestine debacle could be attributed less to Jewish steadfastness and courage than to the ineptitude and corruption of the Farouk regime. Nasser and fellow conspirators – including Anwar al-Sadat – broadened their following within the officer corps, and on July 23, 1952 seized control of Egypt’s government in a bloodless coup. In March of 1954, Nasser replaced Naguib as premier. Later he would assume the presidency.

Israel was singled out as the target of Nasser’s ambitions. In December 1954 the Egyptian minister of national guidance announced that Egypt would never make peace with Israel. These developments took place at a time of widespread German – ex Nazi – participation in the Nasser government, and as a campaign of Egyptian-organized sabotage was launched against Israel. Until then, Jordan had served as the principal base for marauding attacks over Israel’s frontiers. But in 1954 leadership in the guerrilla campaign passed to Egypt.
By October fedayun squads, trained and equipped by Egyptian army units, were penetrating deep into Israel. Roads, bridges, and water pipes were mined, large quantities of equipment and livestock stolen. Soon the entire development program in Israel’s southern desert was threatened and many of the settlers were leaving. Soon Israel found herself isolated.

In 1955 Nasser began exploring the possibilities of obtaining military equipment from the Soviet bloc. Moscow was entirely receptive. It was prepared to exploit any opening to undermine western influence in the Middle East.

In August 1955 Nasser was allowed to purchase some 320 million dollars worth of modern weapons from Czechoslovakia. The quantity of war material involved was unprecedented by Middle Eastern standards. It included 200 tanks, 150 artillery pieces, 120 MiG jet fighters, 50 Jet bombers, 20 transport planes, 2 destroyers, 2 submarines, 15 minesweepers, plus hundreds of vehicles and thousands of modern rifles and machine guns.

In a parallel treaty Syria contracted with the Soviet bloc to purchase an additional 100 tanks, 100 MiG jet fighters, and hundreds of artillery pieces and armored vehicles.

On December 29, 1955, Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev loosed a particularly tough blast against Israel. Moscow made no effort thereafter to disguise its hostility, repeatedly condemning the Jewish state in the Security Council and accusing Ben-Gurion of preparing for war against the Arabs.

Under these bleak circumstances the Israelis were reminded that the nation’s security depended upon its own reserves. The nation’s limited resources clearly dictated a military force based essentially upon reserves. The Knesset enacted a comprehensive Defense Service Law that established the legal foundation of Israel’s citizen army. In the 1950’s mobilization had already become an integral part of Israel’s everyday life. In short, every Israeli was a soldier in either active or reserve status.

Ben-Gurion’s goal was nothing less than the transformation of Israel’s defense branches into a unified, compulsory, professional, and apolitical military machine. As premier and defense minister from 1947 to 1963, Ben-Gurion accomplished the task.

In December of 1953 Moshe Dyan was appointed chief of staff. Under his leadership the army became a hard-hitting, aggressive force. For Dyan the emphasis was on striking power. All planning was geared to a surprise preemptive blow, the hard-driving, even reckless, offensive aimed at breaking the enemy’s morale.

Dyan put his philosophy of aggressive retaliation to work almost immediately. With Ben-Gurion, he was determined to prove to the Arab states that the cost of marauding and killing Israelis was prohibitive. By the mid-1950’s, then, the government’s approach was
to launch punitive expeditions against Arab villages harboring infiltrators, and occasionally against Arab military strongpoints. The raids did much for army morale and training. However, the cost in world opinion and in repeated UN censure was high.

In 1953 the Egyptian coast guard unit at Ras Nasrani had closed off Israeli shipping through the Strait of Tiran. In September 1955 the Egyptians similarly turned back the vessels of other nations bound for Israel’s port of Eilat.

Ben-Gurion, on October 22, 1953 ordered Dayan to make preparations for capturing the Strait of Tiran. By 1955, Israel managed not only to organize its defense establishment, but also to acquire some 200 tanks and 200 planes. On the other hand, most of these were obsolete British and American equipment and insufficient both quantity and quality. The Czech arms deal threatened to give the Arabs a weapons superiority of six to one. France became Israel’s principle supplier of arms.

Then Nasser issued his challenge. Ironically the West’s break with Cairo was precipitated by a matter related entirely to local Egyptian economic developments, the Aswan High Dam on the Nile. On May 16, 1956 the Egyptian foreign ministry announced its recognition of Communist China. The following month Soviet Foreign Minister Demitri Shepilov appeared in Cairo to offer an interest free loan of 120 million dollars. This sequence of events was too much for Washington; Nasser clearly was playing one side against the other. On July 19, 1956 the United States retracted its offer of funds to help build the Aswan Dam. Nasser had anticipated the Western reaction and intended to use cancellation of the loan as his pretext for nationalizing the Suez Canal. Accordingly, on July 26 Nasser proceeded to drop his bombshell: the Suez Canal was being nationalized and its future revenues would be applied to the construction of the Aswan Dam. That night there was delirium in Egypt. Nasser was hailed as a national hero. His domestic position had never been more secure, nor his reputation in the Arab world higher.

Britain was most directly affected. Britain owned a controlling interest in the canal. Nearly a quarter of British imports passed through the canal, and one third of the ships using the waterway were British. At stake too was Britain’s general prestige in the Arab world. Britain was in no position to accept this affront.

At this point both the French and British governments ordered their civilians evacuated from Egypt. Anglo-French military preparations thereafter gained momentum. Britain
and France brought the issue to the UN and the Soviets vetoed any meaningful resolution of censure against Egypt. As far as Britain and France were concerned all peaceful recourse had been exhausted. On June 19, Nasser made his intentions toward Israel clear in a public speech:

We must be strong in order to regain the rights of the Palestinians by force.\(^11\)

Abd al-Hakim Amer, commander in chief of the Egyptian army informed his troops on July 15:

The hour is approaching when [we] … will stand in the front ranks of the battle against imperialism and its Zionist ally.\(^12\)

Ben-Gurion knew that he had to break the Egyptian blockade, he only searched for a decisive moment to act. France supplied the opportunity. The French leadership was interested in a carefully structured, two pronged offensive against Nasser. An Israeli ground attack through Sinai would enable the British and French to paratroop assault the Canal Zone itself.

On October 2, 1956, Dayan revealed to his senior staff what was afoot. The purpose of the impending campaign was to wipe out the Egyptian army in Sinai, destroy the fedayun bases in Gaza, and to open the Strait of Tiran. The role Britain proposed for Israel initially was unacceptable. The first proposal was for the Israeli army to advance in great strength and on a broad front in Sinai and to mount a heavy attack that would threaten Cairo. It would be a real war an the Allied forces could intervene as saviors of peace. This was out of the question for Ben-Gurion. His aim was simply to clear the Egyptians out of Gaza and end the blockade of the strait. An advance on the Canal, let alone Cairo was the last thing in the Israeli prime ministers mind.

Dayan counter proposed that Israel would carry out a limited offensive – more than a raid, less than a war – an operation that would be interpreted as threatening the canal and justifying Allied intervention to safeguard it. France and Britain accepted the Israeli plan.

Israel would strike first on October 29, dropping paratroopers east of the Canal area and would announce the operation over the radio. Britain and France would then address a joint ultimatum to Israel and Egypt to cease military activity. Israel would accept, but would not be obligated to actually observe the cease fire until its troops advance to a line 10 miles east of the Canal area. In fact, the Israelis would have 12 hours to reach this point. Egypt would most certainly reject the discriminatory allied conditions.

\(^{11}\) Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pg. 488

\(^{12}\) Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pg. 488
At this point the British and French air forces would attack Egyptian airfields, destroying Nasser’s planes on the ground, thus removing all fear of Israeli cities being bombed, and simultaneously eliminating any threat against Anglo-French landings. Finally Allied troops would land along the Canal and seize the waterway.

At that moment the outbreak of the Hungarian revolution and its suppression by invading Soviet forces had claimed world attention. Ben-Gurion was convinced that the tumultuous events in eastern Europe would totally absorb the diplomatic efforts of both Washington and the UN Security Council. There would never be a more opportune moment for Israel to attack. The operation was dubbed “Operation Kadesh.”

At 3:30pm on October 29 the 202nd Paratroop Brigade under Colonel Ariel Sharon moved into the Sinai. As Operation Kadesh unfolded, the Israeli government was obliged to lift its veil of secrecy. From his bed, where influenza had prostrated him with a 103 degree temperature, Ben Gurion approved the deceptive announcement early on October 30 that;

> Israeli defense forces entered and engaged fedayun units in Ras en-Nakeb and Quntilla, and seized positions west of the Nakhl crossroads in the vicinity of the Suez Canal. This action follows the Egyptian assaults on Israeli transport on land and seas destined to cause destruction and denial of peaceful life to Israel’s citizens.¹³

Just enough had been revealed to enable the British and French Governments to fulfill their part of the scenario. On the afternoon of October 30 the British and French handed notes to the Israeli and Egyptian ambassadors demanding that their forces “withdraw” respectively to points 10 miles east and west of the Canal. Israel, as planned accepted the Anglo-French ultimatum. From Cairo the response was precisely the one Israel and the Western Allies had anticipated. Despite the panic-stricken entreaties of his generals, Nasser rejected the Allied demand.

At 7:00pm on October 31, Allied jet squadrons began bombardment of Egyptian airfields near the Canal. Ultimately, 200 British and French fighter-bombers, operating from carriers and from bases in Malta and Cyprus, swept back and forth over the Delta and Canal fields, destroying the largest part of the Egyptian air force on the ground. Eventually British and French paratroopers did land and secure the Suez Canal.

Israel swept across the Sinai on four fronts. In the initial stages of the war the opposing forces had been roughly equal in size. However, the quality of Israeli manpower at all levels was far higher. The officers had led imaginatively and bravely – and suffered half the army’s casualties. They allowed nothing to stop their advance. At a cost of 180 men killed and 4 captured, of 20 planes and some 2,000 worn out vehicles, Israel, in

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¹³ Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 497
essentially a 100 hour campaign, had occupied the whole of the Sinai peninsula and the Gaza strip.

Israel has shattered 3 Egyptian divisions, killed 2,000 of the enemy, and taken nearly 6,000 prisoners. Israeli forces likewise captured war material valued at over 50 million dollars, including 7,000 tons of ammunition, half a million gallons of fuel, 100 Bren carriers, 200 military pieces, 100 tanks, over 1,000 other vehicles and an Egyptian frigate that had been trapped off of Haifa by a French destroyer and then rocketed into surrender by Israeli planes.

The world was outraged at Britain, France, and Israel. On November 2 the General Assembly of the UN approved the United States resolution for an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of all occupying forces from Egyptian territory. On November 4 the General Assembly voted to create the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) that would separate the combatants along the Suez Canal and elsewhere in Sinai.

On November 4 the Israeli government announced its willingness to accept the General Assembly cease-fire resolution. The acceptance was conditional on Egypt’s declaration of willingness to 1) accept the cease fire 2) to end the state of war with Israel 3) to terminate all guerrilla operations 4) to enter into immediate peace negotiations with Israel 5) to cease the economic boycott of Israel and 6) to lift the blockade against Israeli shipping.

Initial UN efforts were aimed at extracting France and Britain. Eventually, on December 22 the last British and French troops left the canal zone. A new General Assembly resolution on January 7, 1957 demanded instant Israeli evacuation. The Israeli’s pulled back grudgingly. The UNEF forces filled the vacuum. On January 15 Ben-Gurion announced his government’s decision to evacuate Sinai completely by January 22 with the exception of the Sharm es-Sheikh area guarding the Straits of Tiran. The Gaza Strip would likewise remain under Israeli control.

Eventually a formula was devised that put the UNEF into both Gaza and Sharm es-Sheikh. The formula included assurance that the two sites would be 1) henceforth garrisoned exclusively by the UNEF 2) that the UNEF would safeguard life and property in the two areas and develop specific plans for coping with the refugee problem 3) the UNEF would remain in Gaza and Sharm es-Sheikh for whatever length of time was required to achieve a permanent settlement between Egypt and Israel.

One of Israel’s most devoutly cherished hopes for Operation Kadesh would remain unrealized. This was the fall of Nasser himself. The Egyptian dictator had emerged from his battlefield disaster with his prestige reasonably intact. He had managed to camouflage the awful shellacking his army had suffered at Israeli hands under the reasonable evidence of Anglo-French bombardment and landings.
There was little question that the 100 hour campaign had fulfilled its principal goal of advancing Israel’s security. It profoundly enhanced the morale of the Israeli people themselves. The military lessons of the campaign with its demonstrated advantages of preemptive attack were invaluable. Fedayun activity from Gaza virtually ended. Israelis in the outlying border settlements now could work and sleep in peace for the first time in 7 years. The Gulf of Aqaba was open and would stay open for 11 years.

Those 11 years were all that was needed to establish Israel’s trade relationships with the Orient, to inaugurate a series of pipelines that transformed the little republic into one the major oil depots between Iran and Europe, and to develop an infrastructure that launched Israel on a period to its most impressive economic growth and diplomatic influence. From November, 1956 on, by universal recognition the Jewish state had established itself at last as a factor to be reckoned with, indeed a sovereign entity to be treated with prudence and respect in the councils of nations.
In 1955 and 1956 an increasing number of Arab terrorist outrages were launched against Israel's civilians from Gaza and the Sinai. When Egypt sealed off the Israeli port of Elat by blockading the Gulf of Akaba, Israel regarded that step as a definite act of war, and launched a full scale military attack into Sinai on 29 October 1956. At the same time, Britain and France (who had been angered by Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956), attacked Port Said.
1961 – Adolf Eichmann tried and executed in Israel

On May 23, 1960, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion made an electrifying announcement in the Knesset.

I have to inform the Knesset that a short while ago the Israeli Security Services captured one of the greatest Nazi criminals, Adolf Eichmann, who together with the Nazi leaders was responsible for what was termed “the Final Solution to the Jewish problem,” that is, the destruction of six million European Jews. Eichmann is already in detention in Israel and will soon be put on trial here under the Nazi and Nazi Collaborators Punishment Law, 1950.14

These words were received in incredulous silence. Several moments passed before the listeners grasped the full import of Ben-Gurion’s words. Then, slowly, the members rose to their feet in a sustained ovation of applause and cheering. The announcement culminated one of the most extraordinary manhunts in recent history, the search for the SS officer who had directed the Jewish Section of Nazi Germany’s Reich Main Security Office and who, in that capacity, had presided over a major phase of the “Final Solution.”

After the war Eichmann had eventually made his way to Buenos Aires, Argentina, under a passport bearing the name Ricardo Klement. In 1952 he felt confident enough to send for his family. The children, who had been small when their father left them years earlier and who had been informed that he was dead, were told he was “Uncle Ricardo.” Subsequently, Eichmann “married” their mother, and she became “Mrs. Klement.” He joined the automobile firm of Mercedes-Benz to which he was openly introduced and openly recommended as “SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann, in retirement.”

He was sure by then that the search for him was ended. Nor was he entirely wrong. The official pursuit was indeed over. But there were other hunters. These were the survivors of the Nazi death camps. One of them, Simon Wiesenthal, had founded a documentation center in Vienna immediately after the war and made it his life’s purpose to track down Nazi criminals. It was Wiesenthal who managed finally to secure a rare picture of Eichmann. Wiesenthal continued to pursue every

14 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 552
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scrap of information. Eventually, Eichmann was confirmed to be living in Buenos Aires. It was decided to kidnap him and bring him to Israel.

On May 11, 1960 he was accosted and spirited away to an isolated villa. There he confessed his identity. On May 14 he was drugged and transported to Israel. On May 23 Ben-Gurion made his announcement, first to the cabinet and then to the Knesset. On the very day the announcement was made, Eichmann was arraigned before a magistrate in Jaffa. There he was charged with crimes against the Jewish people, war crimes against humanity, and membership in criminal organizations. Eichmann was then returned to Ramle prison.

The only country to demand Eichmann’s return was Argentina. All other countries, in one way or another, expressed their conviction that Israel would handle the Eichmann case fairly and justly. This expectation was fulfilled to a degree that surprised even the prisoner. The Israeli authorities allowed him to choose his own counsel from any nation of his preference.

At the suggestion of his family he picked Dr. Robert Servatius, a distinguished, 65 year old lawyer on the Cologne bar who had acquired experience in defending war criminals at the Nuremberg trials. Servatius was allowed to bring an assistant counsel with him. The Israeli government paid all their fees and expenses.

The trail began on April 11, 1961 at Beit HaAm, a large public auditorium in Jerusalem. Attorney General Gideon Hausner began his introductory address on April 17. The eight hour statement included these words:

As I stand before you, Judges of Israel, I do not stand alone. With me in this place and at this hour, stand 6 million accusers.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} Sachar, \textit{A History of Israel}, pg. 557
The prosecution cross-examined, submitted vast quantities of its own documentation, then presented innumerable Jewish (and occasional non-Jewish) witnesses to testify on their ordeal and that of the Jewish people during the Holocaust. The audience listened in horror, many times breaking into tears, some fainting. In his defense, Eichmann endlessly minimized his role.

On August 14, 1961, after 114 sessions, the main proceeding came to an end. The court then adjourned for four months and then reassembled on December 11, to pronounce judgment. Eichmann was convicted on all 15 counts of the specific indictment.

On December 15 Eichmann was sentenced to death. Eichmann appealed the verdict, and his case was brought to the Supreme Court in May, 1962. This time the hearings were completed in 6 sessions. On May 29 the lower court verdict was sustained. Eichmann then appealed to the President of Israel. At 8:00 p.m. the following day, May 31, Eichmann was informed that his petition for mercy had been refused and that the execution would take place at midnight.

At the gallows, he refused the black hood and sent greetings to Germany, Austria, Argentina, and to his wife and family. “I had to obey the rules of war and my flag,” he declared just before the trap was sprung. Eichmann’s body was cremated, and in the small hours of June 1 his ashes were carried aboard a police launch. When the vessel crossed the territorial three mile limit, the prisons commission dropped the ashes overboard.

1964 – National Water Carrier

From the earliest days of Jewish settlement in Israel irrigation was the indispensable key to economic survival and growth. By 1960, therefore, Mekorot, Israel’s water planning authority, had laid out the working blueprint of a national irrigation scheme. The budget for the entire undertaking came to over 175 million dollars. No Knesset committee ever questioned it, for the Israelis regarded water as valuable as defense.

Israel utilizes its water very efficiently. By 1963 sewage treatment plants reclaimed 90 million cubic meters each year – 5% of Israel’s total water resources. The purification of sewage was then followed by the Yarkon-Negev and Kishon Valley projects. These projects made 160 million more cubic meters available by 1957.

The last phase of the master plan was the Jordan valley project. The water would have to come from the Galilee rain area. Inasmuch as the largest proportion of this surplus flowed into the Jordan, the river would have to be tapped, its reserve extended by pipe and conduit through the Jezreel valley to the coastal plain and from there to the Negev.

16 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 559
Its first phase was the building of an enormous conduit, traversing two-thirds of the length of the country. Lake Galilee, the mouth of the conduit, functioned as a seminatural reservoir and was tapped during the warm season. The water would first be sluiced into a tunnel extending westward to the lower Galilee hills. Subsequently, a huge concrete pressure pipe funneled the water on through the Jezreel valley, boring through the hills south of the Carmel range in a four-mile tunnel, then extending along the coast to the threshold of the Negev. Thereafter, large distribution lines circulated water throughout the upper quadrant of the desert as far south as Beersheba.

Completed in 1964, the “National Carrier” supplied the nation with a 25% increase in water and a 75% increase for the Negev. The “National Water Carrier” revolutionized the possibilities for agricultural and industrial development in the northern sector of the desert. The communities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, Kiryat Gat, Beersheba, and Dimona, for the first time, were able to meet the growing water requirements of new factories and municipal services. For Israel as a whole the completed Jordan Valley Project opened up assurances of employment for an intended population of at least 5 million.
PLO Created

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO): History & Overview

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is undoubtedly one of the most infamous terrorist organizations around the world. Created in 1964 during the Arab League Summit in Cairo, the PLO's originally-stated goal was the "liberation of Palestine" through armed struggle while seeking to destroy the existence of Zionism in the Middle East.

It was not long before that the group splintered into various factions, all of whom believed they knew the best way to achieve liberation for the Palestinians. The most notable of these groups were the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), and the Fatah. While each of these factions were independently controlled, they all remained more-or-less under the umbrella of the PLO.

By 1967, the PLO had decided that their primary goal was the destruction of the State of Israel. Over the next ten years, this goal was the primary focus of the massive terrorist campaign by which their reputation was formed. This terror war caused hundreds of casualties, on both sides, with very little to show in return for the Palestinian cause. Therefore, the PLO made a conscious decision to alter its focus from based purely on terrorism to one that would include the diplomatic and political elements necessary for meaningful dialogue.

The PLO's partial-reversal in ideology created unhappiness among many of its followers who felt that the organization was not finding its mark. This led to the creation of yet another splinter group called the Rejectionist Front. It was at this time that Yasser Arafat and his group, Fatah, took over the leadership of the PLO.

Things began to change quickly when the PLO gained international recognition from the United Nations as the primary representative of the Palestinian people. Arafat deftly manipulated the organization from one perceived by the West as barbaric into one considered a freedom movement with legitimate claims. Israel, perhaps sensing the growing sympathy, redoubled its efforts to eliminate the Palestinian threat.17

17 http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Terrorism/plo.html
1967 – Six Day War

However, if Israel’s growth and strength were increasingly a fact of Middle Eastern life, so, by the same token, was Arab hatred. By 1965 the Syrian regime had allowed its 47-mile frontier with Israel to become the Middle East’s single most explosive boundary.

When Israel began to embark on its own regional water plan Syria was incensed. Foreign ministers of 11 Arab governments met in Cairo in December 1963 and there reached agreement on their response. They would divert the tributaries so the Jordan river – essentially the Chazbani and the Banias – that arose on the Arab side of the line. In that fashion they would prevent their waters form reaching Israeli territory. To that end, in February, 1964, Syrian and Lebanese engineering teams began the construction of diversion canals several miles within their own borders. They did not get far. Israeli artillery promptly shelled and destroyed their bulldozers. When the operation resumed in the summer of 1965, it was bombed and strafed by Israeli planes. By then, the Syrians had completed only about 1% of the necessary diversion.

Even more incendiary in the Israeli-Syrian relations was the acute state of tension along the demilitarized zones. Nowhere were Israeli citizens more vulnerable to attack. Along the main DMZ area Syrian gun positions in the Golan Heights dominated the Chula valley. Firing from the Golan became so persistent that the Israelis use armored tractors as standard equipment. The confrontation along the Israeli-Syrian frontier was escalating into prolonged artillery duels and even aerial dogfights. In its anti-Israel campaign, the Syrian government was determined as well to make active use of the Palestine refugees. Actually, the decision had been made as early as the Arab summit meeting of January, 1964, when the Palestinians were formally authorized “to carry out their role in liberating their homeland and determining their destiny.”

Several months later, an assembly of Palestine Arabs was convened in Hashemite Jerusalem, and from its proceedings emerged the Palestine Liberation Organization. A rival and even more radical Palestinian group in Syria, the Fatah (Arab Liberation Movement) had been organized several years earlier by veterans of the Mufti’s former Arab Higher Committee.

Even as Syrian troops, ensconced on the Golan, shelled and mortared Israeli farm settlements on the Chula valley floor, Fatah guerrillas were laying repeated ambushes for Israeli army patrols and inflicting numerous casualties.
In 1966, Nasser and signed a new defense pact with the Soviet Union. Under its terms, the Russians were extended naval facilities at the Mediterranean ports of Mersa Matruh and Sidi Barani, at the Red Sea port of Quseir, and at three Red Sea fishing villages. Three airports were placed at the Soviets’ disposal. In return, Moscow undertook to increase its shipments of arms and technicians.

By April of 1967 there could be little question that the deteriorating border situation with Syria was electric with danger. Fatah infiltration raiders were crossing over with greater frequency, each time accompanied by larger numbers of Syrian regular army troops. On May 11, Jerusalem notified the Security Council that unless Syrian provocation’s ended, the Israeli government regarded “itself as fully entitled to act in self-defense.”

At that point, deeply alarmed for the security of their favored Arab protégé, the Russians took their most calamitous misstep since the beginning of their intrusion into the Near East. On May 12, Dimitri Podyedyev, the Soviet ambassador in Cairo, wired Moscow: “Today we passed on to the Egyptian authorities information concerning the massing of Israeli troops on the northern frontier for a surprise attack on Syria.”

The report to Cairo was entirely false. Nasser, in turn, agreed to dispatch a series of military missions to Syria. Upon being taken to the southern frontier with Israel, however, the Egyptian visitors were less than impressed by the evidence they found of Israeli “concentrations.”

Nasser’s decision to let the crisis escalate was based, rather on other factors. On May 15, Cairo announced a state of military emergency and sent two armored divisions moving ostentatiously through the boulevards of Cairo, and then crossing over the Suez into Sinai. Next, on the night of May 16, Nasser suddenly gave orders for the 3,400 man UNEF force near Gaza to redeploy to encampments within the strip itself. The UN would not accept any “half measures,” either the UNEF accomplished its mission without reservation or it would be withdrawn altogether from Egypt. Unknowingly, the UN Secretary General, U Thant, had just dislodged the stone that loosed the avalanche. For on the afternoon of May 17, after a series of lengthy cabinet meetings, the Egyptian government called the secretary-general’s hand. It notified him that it was ordering a complete UNEF evacuation from Egyptian territory and from the Gaza Strip. This flew in the face of the fact that the General Assembly resolution of November 4, 1956 meant the UNEF could not be withdrawn without the consent of the General Assembly. This understanding had been verified in February, 1957 by Dag Hammarskjold following a lengthy personal conference with Nasser.

On May 18, 1967, therefore, U Thant met urgently with delegates of the seven countries whose troops served in the United Nations forces. It was then that the secretary-general learned to his dismay that these representatives, following the lead of India and Yugoslavia, were determined to recall their soldiers at any cost; under no circumstances

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18 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 622
would their governments risk the lives of their troops in the Middle East. Persuaded that further discussions would be useless, U Thant henceforth remained oblivious to appeals from the United States and Israel not to capitulate to Nasser’s demands. Late that day the blue-helmeted UNEF garrisons evacuated their positions at al-Quntilla and Jebel al-Hamra.

Egyptian troops and heavy equipment immediately moved in. Then, more alarming yet, an Egyptian task force suddenly ordered the evacuation of the tiny UNEF company at Sharm es-Sheikh, guarding the Strait of Tiran. As a result of U Thant’s unwillingness to invoke the full range of United Nations procedures, the UNEF collapsed like a house of cards. With it collapsed the world body’s most impressive peacekeeping achievement.

Three Egyptian divisions and more than 600 tanks began fanning out through the Sinai peninsula. At the same time, the Damascus regime mobilized 50 cadet battalions, and Iraqi brigades moved out toward the frontier of Jordan. The governments of Kuwait, Yemen, and Algeria announced their readiness to dispatch troops and planes to Syria and Egypt.

As it developed, the afternoon of May 17 was the turning point of the Middle Eastern crises. Until then retreat without loss of face might still have been possible for Nasser. Having satisfied himself with a show of strength the Egyptian president then could have ordered his divisions back to Cairo, leaving the impression that they had forestalled a Zionist attack. But his government’s response to U Thant and the latter’s instant capitulation, signified the point of no return. To his own astonishment, Nasser had won a brilliant victory scarcely by raising his little finger. Once again he was on the threshold of becoming the unchallenged leader of the Arab world. Now he would have to act the part.

By May 19 Egyptian units were reinforcing their former garrisons in Sharm es-Sheikh, while in Gaza Ahmed Shukeiry’s Palestinian army, consisting mainly of refugees, was preparing to occupy the border encampments that until then had been manned by the UNEF.

On May 20 a general Israeli mobilization was proclaimed. Late on the night of May 21, acceding to the request of his cabinet and of the other Arab governments, Nasser made a fateful decision. At daybreak two Egyptian submarines, a destroyer, and four missile-launcher boats passed through the Suez Canal and headed for the Red Sea. The next day Nasser made a chilling announcement:

The Strait of Tiran is part of our territorial waters. No Israeli ship will ever navigate it again. We also forbid the shipment of strategic material to Israel on non-Israeli vessels.19

19 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 625
The threat to Israel was mortal. Eilat was Israel’s key oil port. By noon of May 23, mobilization in Israel had become total.

On May 23, after Nasser closed the strait, General Yitzhak Rabin was overcome with despair at the government’s indecision and suffered a nervous breakdown. The army medical officer prescribed rest for two or three days until the chief of staff recovered from his collapse, which was officially attributed to “nicotine poisoning.” In effect, the nation and its armed forces were bereft of decisive leadership at one of the gravest moments – perhaps the very gravest – of Israel’s existence. At this point there arose a growing clamor for Moshe Dayan to become the Minister of Defense. On June 1, Israel’s Prime Minister Levi Eshkol gave the defense ministry to Dayan. Popular trust in the famed, one-eyed general was overwhelming. News of his appointment immediately restored the confidence of the armed forces and of the nation at large.

Euphoric in the revived adulation of the Arab world, Nasser addressed the Egyptian parliament on May 25:

> The problem presently before the Arab countries is not whether the port of Eilat should be blockaded or how to blockade it – but how totally to exterminate the State of Israel for all time.

On May 30, Hussein of Jordan flew to Cairo to sign a mutual defense pact with Egypt, treating photographers to the spectacle of himself and Nasser embracing in brotherly friendship. The little Hashamite monarch clearly dared not abstain from an undertaking that was sweeping the entire Arab world into its vortex, and that seemed likely at last to annihilate the Zionist enemy.

On June 3, Iraq also joined the military pact, and the following night an Iraqi motorized brigade crossed into Jordan. At the same time the Iraqi air force concentrated its planes at the Habbaniyah base near the Jordanian frontier.

When Yitzchak Rabin became chief of staff in 1964, he testified before the Knesset security and foreign affairs committee that any future war would have to be won in four days. It could not take substantially longer for economic reasons. The implications were that Israel should attack preemptively. Yet, to avoid alienating world opinion, the nation was left with no recourse but to allow the enemy to mobilize, gather on Israel’s borders, proclaim to the world that this time the Jews would be liquidated – then to strike out at the enemy with an “anticipatory counteroffensive” at the last possible moment.

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20 Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pg. 633
On June 1, foreign minister Abba Eban informed Prime Minister Eshkol that no political purpose would be served in delaying military action.

At 7:10 a.m. on June 5, Major General Mordechai Hod, commander of Israel’s air force, radioed the attack order from the operations room of the defense ministry in Tel
Aviv. Thereupon the world’s most skilled air arms were launched into action. Israeli pilots and ground crews were considered the equal of any in the world.

Thanks also to near-perfect intelligence, the Israeli command had pinpointed the location of virtually all Egyptian planes, all antiaircraft batteries, even wooden dummy planes. It knew, too, when Egyptian pilots flew their morning patrols and when they landed for their morning coffee break. All had been studied, prepared, and rehearsed innumerable times before D-Day.

Now, the first Israeli planes took off at staggered intervals for Egypt’s key air bases in the Sinai Peninsula, Suez rectangle, and Nile Valley. The two-engined Vautour light bombers were assigned the farthest target, Luxor on the Nile, almost twice the distance to Cairo. The single engined Mirages headed to the nearest fields at al-Arish and others in the Sinai. All were scheduled to arrive over their targets at the identical moment, 7:45am Israel time. The pilots were ordered first to destroy the Egyptian bombers and interceptors, then devastate the air bases.

Taking off over the Mediterranean, the planes hooked back over Egypt at near ground level to avoid enemy radar. Reaching their 11 separate targets at the appointed time, the Israeli’s climbed high, then dived to 200 feet as they proceeded to attack the Tupolovs and MiGs. The Egyptian fighters were taxiing to a halt after returning from their morning patrol. The antiaircraft crews were similarly caught away from their positions. The Israeli’s accordingly made four passes over their targets, consuming their allotted seven minutes to destroy the enemy planes, then to rocket bomb the Egyptian airfields. Ten minutes after the first attack wave came the second, and ten minutes after that the third. As the Israeli’s streaked for home, they managed to evade a number of surface-to-air missiles that climbed after them.

In 170 minutes Israel’s pilots had smashed Egypt’s best equipped air bases and turned 300 of Nasser’s 340 combat planes into flaming wrecks. Another 20 Egyptian planes were shot down in the air. When the returning Israeli jets touched down and their pilots debriefed the news of their success was received with disbelief and skepticism. Hod admitted later that;

In my wildest dreams I would never have thought this kind of record possible. I reckoned on at least half a day [to complete the job], maybe even a whole day or a night and a day.\(^\text{22}\)

\(^{22}\) Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 640
The Egyptian air force, the largest in the Middle East was in ruins. Now the Israeli’s were free at the very outset to concentrate on the Egyptian ground armies. Indeed, throughout the next few days the air force roamed at will over Sinai, destroying entire convoys of armor and other vehicles fleeing to the Canal.

At 8:15 on June 5, Israeli ground forces attacked. On your map you can seen the line of attack of the Israeli brigades. By the end of the second day of battle, after 35 hours of uninterrupted war, the first and most difficult phase of the Israeli operational plan had been completed. Egyptian fortifications had been penetrated and bypassed, Sinai was opened wide before Israeli armor, and the roads to the west and south were clear.
Throughout the first day of the Sinai offensive, the Israeli government refrained from issuing announcements on the magnitude of its victories. The only military communiqués that went out over the airwaves were broadcast by Cairo; and during the first 24 hours these releases spoke of unprecedented Egyptian breakthroughs, of Israel’s army and air force destroyed, of Egyptian mechanized columns driving on Tel Aviv. The “news” was accepted without question everywhere in the Arab world, and it influenced the decisions of Syria, Jordan, and Iraq to enter the fighting.

When the hostilities began on June 5, the Syrians adopted a wait-and-see attitude. They preferred simply to shell the Galilee town of Rosh Pina and its neighboring border settlements. Israeli artillery kept up a vigorous reply to the Syrian barrage. By the late afternoon of June 5, the Israeli air force all but eradicated the Syrian air arm and it was apparent to Damascus that it had been misinformed as to the extent of Egyptian “victories.”

Deprived by then of the opportunity to embark on a major offensive, the Ba’ath regime made its second mistake in continuing hostilities on a local scale. On June 6, a Syrian infantry and armored company launched two attacks on Tel Dan and one on Kibbutz Sha’ar Yashuv. These were repelled by Israeli tank and air units. The Syrians would pay bitterly for this miscalculation.

The Jordanian blunder was even more catastrophic. King Hussein received an urgent message from Prime Minister Eshkol appealing to Hussein to refrain from entering the war. The Israeli leader promised that his own government would not initiate hostilities along the eastern front. Shooting from the Jordanian positions at the southern end of Jerusalem broke out at mid-morning on June 5. The Jordanians, it was hoped, were interested simply in making a gesture to remain in Nasser’s good graces.

To ensure that they entertained no serious ambitions, the Israeli air force commenced bombing runs on the Amman and Mafraq airfields at 12:30 pm liquidating the entire Jordanian fighter fleet. At 1:00 pm Arab Legion forces crossed the Jerusalem armistice lines and occupied UN headquarters on the Hill of Evil Counsel.

From the larger military viewpoint the seizure of the Hill of Evil Counsel was Hussein’s gravest error. He failed to detect the power of Israeli air squadrons over Amman when Egypt was boasting that virtually all Israel’s planes had been destroyed.

None of Nasser’s commanders gave him the actual facts. It was only at 4:00 pm, on June 5, that the headquarters officer arrived with straight information, “I have come to tell you that we no longer have an air force.”

On June 6 the Egyptian high command ordered its troops to fall back to the second line of defense. Israel then launched a coordinated attack at dawn on June 7. In the ensuing armored battles, on flat terrain, the highly skilled Israeli tankers all but annihilated their opponents.
In the end more than 800 Egyptian tanks were knocked out or captured. At the same time, another conquest proved surprisingly easy. On June 7, Sharm es-Sheikh, the Egyptian coastal fortress overlooking the Strait of Tiran, fell without resistance. The Egyptians fled even before Israeli paratroops could be dropped or the first amphibious units disembarked from their LSTs. Thus elements of the battalions that had been landed at Sharm es-Sheikh subsequently were flown by helicopter to al-Tur where they continued northward along the shore of the Gulf of Suez. On June 8 they linked up with Israeli units coming down the Gulf coast from Ras Sudr. The entire Sinai was now ringed by Israeli forces. Only one strip of unguarded territory remained. This was the Canal itself.

With the greater part of the Egyptian army smashed in the desert behind them the Israeli’s pressed ahead to the canal. On June 8 Israeli troops had reached al-Qantara and destroyed the remaining Egyptian armor there.

The victory was a staggering one. Seven Egyptian divisions totaling 100,000 men had been crushed in less than 4 days. At 1:00pm on June 8, Federenko of the Soviet Union introduced a cease fire resolution at the UN. The resolution was passed unanimously. Israeli ambassador Abba Eban declared that Israel would abide by its term provided the Arab states indicated agreement. Nasser accepted the resolution.

At this point we move to the Jordanian front.

**Jerusalem reunited**

Jordanian troops occupied Government House on the afternoon of June 5 and proceeded to shell the small Israeli detachment on Mt. Scopus. At that point, with Dayan’s approval, Rabin issued orders to General Narkiss, “Retake Government House, link up with Scopus, and protect the Jerusalem high ground by any means.”23 A company of troops set about ascending the Hill of Evil Counsel, by mid-afternoon the operation was completed with the loss of 8 dead.

Simultaneously, a paratroop brigade under the command of **Colonel Mordechai Gur** was reassigned from its intended Sinai destination and transported by bus from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Gur’s instructions were to attack Jordanian fortifications on the perimeter of the Arab city, then move against the Legionnaires atop the heights near Scopus.

At 7:45pm searchlights went on atop the Histadrut building and focused their beams on Jordanian artillery and machine gun positions. The Israelis then shelled the illuminated targets. At the same moment the

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23 Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pg. 650
Jerusalem Brigade’s ancient Sherman tanks were rolled out of their camouflaged shed and set moving toward the Jordanian bunkers.

The attack began at 2:20am on June 6. The first prong of the attack was concentrated on Ammunition Hill. The Legionnaires fought heroically, and positions had to be stormed trench by trench, in a fierce and costly battle.

The second prong of the attack was launched from the Mea Shearim quarter directly against the Mandelbaum gate. Once more fighting was intense, raging from street to street and house to house. With the support of tanks the paratroops completed the action by dawn.

Rabin then ordered his general to launch a coordinated pincer movement through the West Bank. The operation was carried out with almost mathematical precision. By late morning of June 7, ravaged by the aerial strafing and bombing, Jordan’s 25th Infantry and 40th Armored brigades collapsed as fighting units. All the major cities of the West Bank were in Israel’s hands. Israeli armored columns had likewise reached the Jordan river.

At 8:30am on June 7, Gur ordered an infantry attack against the final remaining Jordanian high point overlooking Jerusalem. It was the Augusta Victoria church and it fell easily. Immediately afterward, the paratroops launched a tank and infantry assault against the Lion’s Gate, one of the principle entrances to the Old City. Rolling up the narrow Via Dolorosa, the column made directly for the ancient Temple Mount. Then the paratroopers dashed for the Western Wall to clear it of snipers.

The firing had not yet stopped around the western wall before Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Chief Chaplain of the Israeli army, rushed to the holy sight to loose a triumphant blast on his Shofar. Dayan, Rabin, and Eshkol soon followed, dazed and awe struck by the recovery. Touching the flagstones of the ancient wall, even hardened veterans wept.
Hussein had paid dearly for his gamble. He had lost over 15,000 troops in dead, wounded, and missing, as well as his entire air force and half his armor. He had also been stripped of half of his kingdom, its richest agricultural lands, and the tourist revenues from East Jerusalem and Bethlehem that accounted for 40% of his nation’s income.

But he had made the Israeli’s pay too. The truth is that we paid a heavier price in Jerusalem than we did in Sinai. 1,756 casualties against 1,075. No less than 25% of Israel’s losses on the Jordanian front were taken in the battle for Jerusalem and specifically for the Old City. Few Israelis begrudged the cost.

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Conquest of the Golan Heights

The final decision awaiting the government was the action regarding Syria. At 3:00am on June 9 Dayan was informed that the Egyptian and Jordanian cease-fires had come into effect. It was at this point that he decided to move against the northern enemy.

Israel’s strategy was to crack the main fortifications, move onto roads behind the Syrians and the enemy will panic. The strategy proved correct. The morale of the Syrian army was shattered irretrievably and its troops began fleeing for their lives.

At 5:30pm on June 9, the Syrian representative in the Security council announced that his government had ordered an end to the fighting in compliance with the UN cease fire resolution. Within a half hour similar orders had gone out to Israeli armed forces on the Northern front. However, Israel maintained their drive with the intention of taking the entire Golan. At the defense ministry in Tel Aviv, tension was growing as the Golan offensive raced the UN cease-fire deadline.

The Israeli drive was successful and the Golan Heights were taken. The Six-Day War ended officially at 6:30pm Israel time on June 10. It had been a catastrophic defeat for the Syrians. In twenty-seven hours of battle they had lost 2,500 killed and 5,000 wounded, one third of their tanks, half their artillery, 80,000 soldiers and civilians fled the Golan.

Israel lost 115 killed and 306 wounded, as well as 2 civilians killed and 16 wounded from the Syrian bombardment against the Galilee settlements. The entire Golan plateau was now in Israel’s hands; the long nightmare of Syrian bombardments was over. The nations equipment losses were 40 planes and 80 tanks.

The Arabs may have suffered up to 30,000 casualties, at least 450 planes and 1,000 tanks destroyed or captured as well as vast quantities of supplementary equipment.
The First Regathering: Zionism and the Modern State of Israel

On the morning of 9 June 1967, the Israelis attacked the Syrians in the Golan heights. By the afternoon of 10 June, after 27 hours of fighting, the heights had been captured, and Israeli forces had entered Kuneitra. 1,000 Syrians, and 115 Israeli soldiers, were killed. Both Syria and Israel accepted the Security Council's call for a cease fire on the evening of 10 June.

Before the battle for the Golan heights, Syrian artillery had bombard the Israeli civilian settlements (which they had been accustomed to bombard from 1949 to 1967), destroying or burning 205 houses, 175 acres of fruit orchards, and 75 acres of grain.

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Results

A new military-geographic reality had been created in the Middle East. Before the war, the main Israeli population center had lain within 4 minutes flying time of the nearest Arab air base. Any Arab land offensive into Israel, except in the southern Negev, would have affected thickly inhabited areas. Much of Israel’s narrow waistline had fallen within Arab artillery range, as had Jewish Jerusalem and the northern Galilee settlements. Now, after the war the situation was reversed. It was Israeli planes and troops that were within close striking distance of Amman, Damascus, and Cairo. Jewish Jerusalem was no longer was on the firing line, nor was the Galilee, nor any other Israeli population center.

Howard Sachar explains this incredible change from a purely human perspective.

What accounted for this earthquake? The explanation hardly could be attributed to superiority of weapons; the equipment advantages was entirely the Arab’s. Rather, as in earlier Arab-Israeli wars, the decisive factor was the human element. The literacy gap between Arab and Israeli common soldier was one factor in this equation. Leadership was another. The Egyptian staff officers were guilty of astonishing overconfidence and lack of organization. … The force of personal example was vital as well. At almost every echelon, Arab staff and operations officers panicked once the Jews achieved their initial breakthroughs. … In the end, however, it more than literacy and commitment that tipped the balance in Israel’s favor. It was the courage born of desperation – at all levels.26

All that Howard Sachar has said is undoubtedly true, but it is not enough and it is not satisfactory. In the end there is more to be said. In the end we have to acknowledge that the hand of God is poised over the nation of Israel. Human courage cannot explain the Six-Day War. Only when we acknowledge the unseen activity of Divine intervention can we satisfactorily account for all that happened.

1993, page 69

26 Sachar, A History of Israel, pg. 660
On June 9 the Communist bloc leaders gathered in Moscow, where seven of them issued a long declaration of solidarity with the Arab cause, promising help to the Arab nations should Israel continue its “aggression.” Within the next few days all the Communist governments except for Rumania, severed relations with Israel. Bickering and belligerent incidents continued and the UN tried to hammer out an acceptable diplomatic formula for all sides.

The result on November 22, 1967 was UN Resolution 242. Resolution 242 contains three important provisions in regard to Israel and her neighbors: 1) the Arab states are required to recognize the existence of the State of Israel and make peace. 2) Israel’s security needs are acknowledged. Any peace agreements with the Arabs must include “secure and recognized boundaries” that Israel can withdraw behind. Those boundaries need not be the same as the lines drawn in the armistice agreements of 1949. 3) Israel can occupy and administer the territories that were conquered during a state of war. This occupation and administration can continue until peace agreements are recognized. Resolution 242 does not require that Israel return to a state of military insecurity.

Arthur J. Goldberg, the American ambassador who led the delegation to the UN in 1967, submitted on May 8, 1973, an authoritative interpretation of the meaning of Resolution 242. Explaining that the resolution is not self-implementing and that its goal is an accepted and agreed upon settlement, Goldberg rejected the interpretation that the resolution calls for complete Israeli withdrawal.

He wrote:

Resolution 242 does not explicitly require that Israel withdraw to the lines occupied by it before the outbreak of the war. The Arab states urged such language; the Soviet Union ... proposed this at the Security Council, and Yugoslavia and some other nations at the Special Session of the General Assembly. But such withdrawal language did not receive the requisite support either in the Security Council or in the Assembly.

Resolution 242 simply endorses the principle of withdrawal of Israel’s armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict, and interrelates this with the principle that every state in the area is entitled to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.²⁷

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Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) Founded

**History:** The PFLP was founded by George Habash in December 1967, in the wake of the Six-Day War. Throughout most of its existence, the organization combined Marxist ideology with Palestinian nationalism, and was among the first of the Palestinian organization to use terrorism as a means to win attention to its cause. The PFLP saw the elimination of Israel as a means towards the ultimate goal of ridding the Middle East of dictators who kow-towed to Western capitalism.

The organization carried out a long list of terrorist attacks in the international arena, particularly hijackings against aviation targets. The majority of these attacks were carried out under the direction of George Habash’s associate Dr. Wadi’ Haddad, better known to Palestinians as “The Master.”

**Leadership:** George Habash resigned from the leadership of the PFLP in May 2000. His protégé, Mustafa Ali Kasam Zabiri, also known as Abu Ali Mustafa, was chosen as general secretary of the organization, and formerly took up office in July of that year.

Even within his own organization, he was regarded as something of an extremist, and was known as Pro-Syrian. From the outset, he opposed the Oslo agreements and supported the continuation of the military struggle to eradicate Israel. In an interview with the Qatari satellite television station Al-Jazeera shortly before he became leader of the PFLP, Mustafa stressed his movement’s commitment to the struggle against Israel, regardless of peace efforts. “We believe the conflict and the struggle against Israel is a strategic [principle] that is not subordinated to any consideration,” he said.

In the September 1999, Abu Ali Mustafa, received permission to enter the Palestinian autonomous areas. At that time, he transferred the headquarters of the PFLP from Damascus to the Palestinian autonomous city of Ramallah. With the outbreak of the current conflict, Mustafa reaffirmed his support for the “armed struggle,” and ordered his organization to begin executing extensive terrorist operations, part of which took place within Israeli territory.

On 27 August 2001, Abu Ali Mustafa was killed in an initiated attack by the Israeli army, which fired three missiles from a helicopter into Mustafa’s office.

Abu Ali Mustafa was succeeded as leader of the PFLP by Ahmed Sadat, who was appointed General Secretary on 3 October 2001. Sadat’s appointment to lead the group as seen as further radicalization of the PFLP.

Sadat, a leader of the extreme faction of the PFLP in the territories, supports the continuation of the armed struggle and staunchly opposes the Oslo Accords. He sees himself loyal to the “original” principles of the PFLP – those of George Habash – and
since the outbreak of the current violence has, together with along with Ahad Olma, directed the majority of the organization’s terrorist attacks.

1968 – Yasser Arafat Becomes Head of the PLO

Mohammed Abdel-Raouf Arafat As Qudwa al-Hussaeini was born on 24 August 1929 in Cairo, his father a textile merchant who was a Palestinian with some Egyptian ancestry, his mother from an old Palestinian family in Jerusalem. She died when Yasir, as he was called, was five years old, and he was sent to live with his maternal uncle in Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, then under British rule, which the Palestinians were opposing. He has revealed little about his childhood, but one of his earliest memories is of British soldiers breaking into his uncle's house after midnight, beating members of the family and smashing furniture.

After four years in Jerusalem, his father brought him back to Cairo, where an older sister took care of him and his siblings. Arafat never mentions his father, who was not close to his children. Arafat did not attend his father's funeral in 1952.

In Cairo, before he was seventeen Arafat was smuggling arms to Palestine to be used against the British and the Jews. At nineteen, during the war between the Jews and the Arab states, Arafat left his studies at the University of Faud (later Cairo University) to fight against the Jews in the Gaza area. The defeat of the Arabs and the establishment of the state of Israel left him in such despair that he applied for a visa to study at the University of Texas. Recovering his spirits and retaining his dream of an independent Palestinian homeland, he returned to Faud University to major in engineering but spent most of his time as leader of the Palestinian students.

He did manage to get his degree in 1956, worked briefly in Egypt, then resettled in Kuwait, first being employed in the department of public works, next successfully running his own contracting firm. He spent all his spare time in political activities, to which he contributed most of the profits. In 1958 he and his friends founded Al-Fatah, an underground network of secret cells, which in 1959 began to publish a magazine advocating armed struggle against Israel. At the end of 1964 Arafat left Kuwait to become a full-time revolutionary, organising Fatah raids into Israel from Jordan.

It was also in 1964 that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was established, under the sponsorship of the Arab League, bringing together a number of groups all working to free Palestine for the Palestinians. The Arab states favoured a more conciliatory policy than Fatah's, but after their defeat by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War,
Fatah emerged from the underground as the most powerful and best organised of the groups making up the PLO, took over that organisation in 1969 when Arafat became the chairman of the PLO executive committee. The PLO was no longer to be something of a puppet organisation of the Arab states, wanting to keep the Palestinians quiet, but an independent nationalist organisation, based in Jordan.

Arafat developed the PLO into a state within the state of Jordan with its own military forces. King Hussein of Jordan, disturbed by its guerrilla attacks on Israel and other violent methods, eventually expelled the PLO from his country. Arafat sought to build a similar organisation in Lebanon, but this time was driven out by an Israeli military invasion. He kept the organization alive, however, by moving its headquarters to Tunis. He was a survivor himself, escaping death in an airplane crash, surviving any assassination attempts by Israeli intelligence agencies, and recovering from a serious stroke.

His life was one of constant travel, moving from country to country to promote the Palestinian cause, always keeping his movements secret, as he did any details about his private life. Even his marriage to Suha Tawil, a Palestinian half his age, was kept secret for some fifteen months. She had already begun significant humanitarian activities at home, especially for disabled children, but the prominent part she took in the public events in Oslo was a surprise for many Arafat-watchers. Since then, their daughter, Zahwa, named after Arafat's mother, has been born.

The period after the expulsion from Lebanon was a low time for Arafat and the PLO. Then the intifada (shaking) protest movement strengthened Arafat by directing world attention to the difficult plight of the Palestinians. In 1988 came a change of policy. In a speech at a special United Nations session held in Geneva, Switzerland, Arafat declared that the PLO renounced terrorism and supported "the right of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to live in peace and security, including the state of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours".

The prospects for a peace agreement with Israel now brightened. After a setback when the PLO supported Iraq in the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the peace process began in earnest, leading to the Oslo Accords of 1993.

This agreement included provision for the Palestinian elections which took place in early 1996, and Arafat was elected President of the Palestine Authority. Like other Arab regimes in the area, however, Arafat's governing style tended to be more dictatorial than democratic. When the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in Israel in 1996, the peace process slowed down considerably.

Arafat died in France on November 11, 2004. French doctors who were treating him stated that he died from a massive hemorrhagic cerebrovascular accident, although other people have offered different theories.
War of Attrition

Troubles began to brew for Nasser following the defeat of the Six-Day War. Domestic unrest began to surface and in October of 1968 riots erupted. As Nasser saw it, vindication by war was the one sure method of strengthening his hand within his own country. In fact, his hand already was being strengthened by the Russians, who viewed Israel’s pulverizing victory in the Six-Day War as an intolerable challenge to their own leadership in the Middle East.

From the moment the cease-fire came into effect the Soviets proceeded to reinstate large-scale arms deliveries to the Middle East. Within two weeks, over 200 crated MiG fighters were airlifted to Egypt and Syria. Throughout the rest of the summer and autumn, between two and three ships a week docked at Alexandria harbor carrying replacement weapons. Fifteen months after the war, Egypt’s tank strength had been increased from 250 to 470 and the air force had received 400 new planes.

A pattern of violence along the Suez Canal accordingly developed in erratic sequences. The initial phase, from the end of the war until April, 1969, was characterized by sporadic outbursts that grew in intensity and frequency as the Egyptians recovered from their 1967 disaster. Each Egyptian probe from the West Bank of the Canal evoked a tough counterblow from the Israelis. The Canal offered each side a first rate defensive barrier.

By autumn of 1968 a military stand-off had developed. October, 1968 marked a turning point in the rising crescendo of Suez fighting. In a single Saturday afternoon a massive Egyptian artillery barrage killed 15 Israelis and demonstrated that Egypt had accumulated a vast superiority of men and equipment on the west bank of the Canal. From then until late summer of 1969 the intensity of Egyptian shelling steadily mounted. The revived hostilities swiftly developed into an overt Egyptian “war of attrition.”

Nasser’s goal was to prevent the transformation of the Canal into a de facto border. He sought to accomplish this by inflicting such heavy casualties that the Israelis would be forced back into Sinai or compelled to accept a political solution on Arab terms.

The lethal Egyptian bombardment of October, 1968 dictated a modified defensive approach. To that end, the Israelis began digging into hardened concrete and steel-reinforced bunkers and fortified positions. These were known subsequently as the Bar-Lev Line, after Israel’s then chief of staff, General Chaim Bar-Lev. With the completion of the fortifications in March, 1969, the Israeli general staff expected to be able to withstand the developing war of attrition.

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28 de facto (dî fæk’to) adjective: 1) Actual: de facto segregation 2) Actually exercising power though not legally or officially established: a de facto government. [Latin : dê, from, according to + facto, ablative of factum, fact.] The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition is licensed from Houghton Mifflin Company. Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.
To reverse the heavy casualty trends, Israel, in late July, 1969, launched a sustained air bombardment of Egyptian guns on the west bank of the Canal. For the next three months Israeli planes battered away at the enemy emplacements. Gradually Egyptian positions along the waterway were silenced. Israeli losses dropped markedly.

On January 22, 1970, Nasser paid an urgent visit to Moscow. In informed the Soviet leadership that the Israelis, in an effort to relieve pressure on their Bar-Lev Line, were now bombing Egyptian artillery emplacements west of the Canal and targets deep in the Nile valley. A consequence of this far-reaching aerial activity was the evacuation of some half a million Egyptian civilians from the Canal Zone, and the exposure of the Egyptian interior to Israeli incursions that were both militarily damaging and politically humiliating. A third of the Egyptian fighter force already had been shot down by enemy planes, Nasser admitted, and the morale of his troops had virtually collapsed.

The Soviets agreed to participate more actively in defending Egyptian military and civilian targets. By mid-February the Soviet airlift traffic to Egypt had increased four times above its ordinarily high level. Within six months the Russians had between 10,000 and 14,000 of their own “instructors” and “advisors” in Egypt, as well as an impressive naval flotilla of sixty vessels off the Egyptian coast – an armada that matched the US 6th Fleet in tonnage and surface firepower. Additionally, Soviet pilots were flying reconnaissance missions from Egyptian bases, others were on interception alert at Egyptian fields, while Soviet units manned SAM-3 antiaircraft missile sites.

For Israel, the most crucial development was intelligence information that Soviet pilots were assuming responsibility for air defense over the Nile Valley. Accordingly, in April 1970, the Israelis suspended their deep penetration raids. The Egyptians in turn began moving new SAM missile artillery batteries toward the Canal. At the end of June, 1970 Soviet aviators were flying combat patrols on both the northern and the southern outlets of the Canal.

The Egyptian/Soviet defense system was further thickened with the introduction of SAM-4 and SAM-6 missiles. Before these new rockets were detected on June 30, they managed to shoot down two Israeli Phantom Jets. Early in July they brought down and additional five Phantoms over the west bank of the Canal.

As the Israelis encountered these Soviet tactics and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of enemy missile batteries they recognized that they were facing their gravest military crises since the week immediately preceding the 1967 war. By the end of July, 1970 Israel had suffered more than 3,000 casualties since the 1967 war.

There was another side to the picture. The Egyptians had taken a fearful battering of their own. Since April, 1970 alone they had lost over 10,000 casualties to Israeli air and artillery action.
Nasser died of a heart attack, in September, 1970. The accession of Anwar al-Sadat allowed Jerusalem, for the first time, to anticipate a new and possibly more moderate stance.

On May 27, 1971 came the revelation of a new and wide-ranging treaty between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Early in 1972 agreement was reached between the US and Israel on a continued supply to Israel of American Phantom jets and other sophisticated electronic equipment. By the spring of that year the Israeli air force evidently had assured itself superiority not only over its Egyptian counterpart but over the Egyptian-soviet defense network.

The fact registered in Cairo. This accounted for mounting frustration in the Egyptian government and eventually for a crises in relations between Sadat and the Kremlin leadership. Moscow’s goal was a permanent military base in Egypt, to be used for its own strategic and regional purposes. The Kremlin was not interested in direct military involvement in the conflict with Israel. They did not want their own Middle Eastern Vietnam. Sadat was angered. He retaliated with an ultimatum on July 13, 1972 telling the Soviets to withdraw their advisors and instructors. To the astonishment of both Washington and Israel the Russian evacuated the largest part of their personnel from Egypt. The War of Attrition collapsed.
The First Regathering: Zionism and the Modern State of Israel

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1969 – Golda Meir becomes Prime Minister

Just as David Ben Gurion is the man most associated with the Yishuv, so Golda Meir is probably the woman most associated with the modern State of Israel. She was born Golda Mabovitch, in 1898, in Kiev, Russia. Her family emigrated to the United States in 1906 and took up residence in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She embraced Zionism in 1915 and eventually emigrated to Palestine in 1921 with her husband Morris Myerson. They joined kibbutz Merhavyah.

In 1934 she became a member of the Executive Committee of the Histadrut. The British attempted to crush the Haganah and Jewish resistance in 1946 by arresting the leaders of the Yishuv. As a result, Golda was chosen as the acting head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. In this position she was the principle Jewish representative negotiating with the British.

She became well known for her unusually successful trip to the United States in January, 1948. She was able to secure generous financial aide from the US Jewish community as she effectively presented Israel’s struggle. During this period she engaged in a secret and dangerous, although unsuccessful, journey across the Jordanian border to King Abdullah hoping to convince him not to attack the newborn state of Israel.

Her political career continued to rise after the establishment of the modern State of Israel. In 1948 she was appointed minister to Moscow. She held this post until April, 1949. She was elected to the first Knesset in 1949 as a member of the Mapai party. Minister of Labor was her first assignment. In 1956 she accepted an appointment as Israel’s foreign minister. This position catapulted her into international notoriety.

She became the secretary-general of the Israel Labor Party and in 1969. After the death of Levi Eshkol Golda Meir became the fourth prime minister of Israel. She held that post until 1974. She resigned from the position in 1974 in response to criticism that she received regarding Israel’s lack of preparation for the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Golda Meir died four years later in 1978.

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30 Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 11, col. 1242-1246

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1973 – Yom Kippur War

Complacency

These bold-faced and self-congratulatory placards greeted the Israeli public as the elections for Israel’s 8th Knesset drew near.

There is peace on the banks of the Canal, and in the Sinai Desert, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Judea, Samaria, and on the Golan. The lines are safe. The bridges are open. Jerusalem is united. New settlements have been established and our political position is stable. This is the result of a balanced, bold, and far-sighted policy. … You know that only the [Labor] Alignment could have accomplished this.\(^\text{32}\)

These bits of political propaganda expressed a quite genuine mood of national security and prosperity. In the autumn of 1973, Israel’s economy sustained its upward momentum, the GNP continued to grow at an annual rate of 10%, and employment opportunities were so widespread that even 130,000 Arab workers commuting from the “administered” territories did not take up the slack. Evidence of the boom was everywhere to be seen: in high-rise apartment buildings, luxurious new villas, a forest of television antennas, crowded shops, roads and highways choked with fully 370,000 private vehicles in a population of less than 3 million. And all this in addition to unprecedented security at home. Little wonder that the electoral campaign was taking place in an atmosphere so devoid of survivalist urgency as to border on complacency.

In the early September of 1973 a new political party came into being. It was a Right-Center bloc entitled Likud (Unity) and dominated by Menachem Begin.

On the military scene self-assurance reflected and influenced Israel’s military posture. Laxity began to taint all facets of the defense structure. The premier example was the Bar-Lev Line. The Bar-Lev Line had never been conceived as a barrier against full-scale invasion from Egypt. Its initial purpose was to serve merely as a trip-wire that would activate reinforcements from bases and roads deeper in Sinai.

At tremendous expense some thirty major strongholds had been built along the Canal at irregularly spaced intervals. The establishment of the Bar-Lev fortifications was sharply criticized by several respected army commanders. The said that the Bar-Lev line would create in the army and in Israel at large a fixed defense philosophy. This approach was alien to the nation’s tradition of mobility and retaliatory attack. Never had such elaborate fortifications been constructed even to protect Israel itself.

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\(^\text{32}\) Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pg. 740
The dividing line between conceiving of the Bar-Lev line as an early warning outpost and as a early defense line gradually became blurred. It was this subsequent lack of clarity, with its mixture of fixed-defense and trip-wire concepts, that was to exact its toll in the first hours of October 6, 1973.

Israeli self-assurance plainly was not weakened by the death of Nasser in September, 1970 or even less by the choice of vice-president Anwar Sadat as his successor. Sadat’s relaxed approach, his lack of interest in Pan-Arabist adventures, and his involvement in essentially domestic concerns seemingly gave hope for peace in the Middle East.

Yet for all his gracious demeanor and generosity, the new president was laying the groundwork for a confrontation with Israel from the very onset of his presidency. For one thing, Egypt’s economic needs, its population explosion, dictated the vital importance of opening the Suez Canal and rebuilding the Canal cities. Thus as early as October, 1971, Sadat instructed his military command to prepare for crossing the Canal. The president warned his countrymen the following May, 1972 that a showdown with Israel was inevitable and that he was prepared to “sacrifice a million men”\(^{33}\) in the forthcoming war.

Few in Israel gave heed to Sadat’s warnings, particularly after July, 1972, when he ordered the removal of Soviet advisors from Egypt. Sadat then embarked on building a common strategy within the Arab camp. He had little difficulty with President Hafez al-Assad in Syria. It was the expulsion of Soviet advisors from Egypt in July, 1972 that in the end strengthened Assad’s hand.

As a rebuke to Sadat, and in an effort to consolidate their position in the Middle East, the Soviets decided to ship unprecedented quantities of military equipment to Syria, including 300 new tanks, 300 MiG-21 fighter planes, and hundreds of late-model SAM-6 missiles. Indeed, Syria now became the most heavily armed nation per capita in the Arab world.

Extensive plans were laid for a two-pronged attack under Egyptian strategic command. Sadat himself visited Damascus in May and June to confirm these arrangements. Sadat won over Feisal of Saudi Arabia and mended fences with Hussein of Jordan.

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\(^{33}\) Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pg. 747
He even won assurance of Soviet military backing. Throughout the summer of 1973 the Soviets accelerated their arms shipments to Syria and in the early fall embarked upon a massive new delivery program to Egypt. The shipments included substantial quantities of the latest antiaircraft missiles, ranging from the highly mobile SAM-6s to shoulder carried SAM-7’s, as well as limited numbers of SCUD and Frog ground-to-ground missiles, for attack against Israel’s population centers.

Plans were made for a wartime airlift. In the week before October 6, the Soviets launched 5 new Cosmos satellites into orbit to photograph Israeli defenses in the north and south. By then, too, a Soviet electronics intelligence ship was sailing toward Egypt, and the families of Soviet advisors in Egypt and Syria were being hastily evacuated.

October 6 was decided upon as the most advantageous date. The Israelis would be preoccupied with their election campaigns, they would be worshipping and fasting on their holy day of Yom Kippur, and they would hardly expect an attack during the Moslem festival of Ramadan. Everything depended on simultaneous initiative and surprise.

The Israelis were by no means oblivious to the scope of these maneuvers, nor to the fact that large quantities of men and equipment were being accumulated along the waterway. Neither did it escape them that, in the north, the Syrians were methodically augmenting their tank and artillery forces in the triple lines of defense that had been constructed across the Golan plain to the outskirts of Damascus. For the time being the Israeli general staff persuaded itself that these maneuvers and reinforcements were essentially defensive. In the south they were interpreted as yet another ruse in Sadat’s annual war of nerves.

Sadat and his advisers did much to foster this illusion. For one thing, the Egyptian president had been announcing the “moment of decision” with such frequency during the past two years that it was difficult take seriously any of his latest warnings. Now, in the last months before October, Sadat intensified his deception. He allowed reports to be circulated of growing “tensions” between Egypt and the Soviet Union and of Soviet unwillingness to provide Egypt with new weaponry following the July, 1972 expulsion of Russian advisors.

Israel believed these reports. On October 3, Prime Minister Golda Meir held a cabinet meeting with her defense and military commanders, Moshe Dayan, Yigdal Allon, Israel Galili, and others. The group agreed unanimously that war was not imminent.

In fact, Israeli intelligence had all the necessary data on Arab preparations and deployments. Its failure was in evaluation. Israel was relying heavily on military electronic data provided by technicians. Modern electronic equipment could not replace, scholarly, analytical appraisals of the Arab mentality. The intelligence chiefs had made up their minds that Sadat and Assad would surely understand, as Israel understood, that a far reaching offensive operation was unthinkable without dominant air power and the Arabs were unlikely to have an effective bomber force for several years. This was the
“conception” that inhibited a broader and more imaginative understanding of Arab frustration and vindictiveness.

Reaction to the Arab concentration of forces came belatedly, indeed not until October 5, the eve of Yom Kippur. It was then only, faced with overwhelming evidence of large-scale Arab preparations, that the general staff agreed to declare an alert. At 4:00am the next day Israeli and American monitors had intercepted the unmistakable radio signals of final Arab war preparations. Immediately Dayan and General Elazar, the chief of staff were notified and informed that zero hour evidently would come in 14 short hours.

At 5:00 am the general staff commanders were meeting at the defense ministry in Tel Aviv. Elazar requested full, immediate mobilization and a preemptive air strike. Dayan turned him down, although he consented finally to recommend the mobilization of the armored corps reserve.

100,000 armored corps personnel began assembling. Fortunately, on Yom Kippur, it was possible to contact the largest numbers of reservists at their homes or in synagogues. The roads were also clear of traffic. Even then, more than 24 hours would pass before all men reached their units.

The men on the Bar-Lev line were ordered to withdraw to their fortifications and to keep alert. This they did in a leisurely fashion, refusing to take seriously the notion of a major attack. Many of the troops were inexperienced young reservists. Large numbers of trained regulars had been given leave for Yom Kippur – another lethal blunder.

From his headquarters in Nazareth, General Yitzack Hofi, the northern front commander issued orders for an alert. He was denied authority to move his standing tank brigade forward, lest the Syrians regard this as a provocation. Again, the alert was observed laxly, reflecting the erosion of military discipline since 1967.

At 2:00pm the Israeli cabinet gathered in an emergency session, a military aide suddenly entered the conference room and whispered urgently to Mrs. Meir. The enemy onslaught had begun.

**Northern War with Syria**

It began with a vengeance. Thousands of shells and bombs exploding along the eastern bank of the Canal and along the entire cease-fire line of the Golan heights. Enemy planes roared overhead, strafing deep behind Israel forward positions. Israel quickly lost her radar surveillance fortification 6,000 feet atop Mount Hermon. It was an earthquake of an assault in the Golan.

After a 55 minute artillery barrage, two Syrian armored divisions of 800 tanks and three infantry divisions in personnel carriers began rumbling across the cease fire line. The
hopelessly outnumbered Israeli defenders fought as if berserk, inflicting heavy losses but only delaying the steady advance. The Israeli’s were eventually reduced to 6 tanks.

On the evening of October 8 the Syrians unleashed another devastating artillery barrage and a new force of 600 heavy tanks emerged from the smoke followed by even larger waves of armored personnel carriers. The shadow of a new Holocaust descended upon Israel. However, it developed that the Syrians, in this last effort, had expended everything. They were out of supplies and needed to be equipped badly. As Israeli reinforcements slowly began to crawl up the Golan they began to maul the Syrian supply convoys with pinpoint gunnery.

Their supply convoys suddenly began turning in their tracks and running. That left the front line troops without firepower and they began to flee as well. The bludgeoned Israeli defenders shook off their exhaustion, managed to round up 20 tanks and made mincemeat of the Syrian armor and personnel carriers as they pursued them. A handful of dazed and flogged youngsters in a scattering of battered tanks had lifted the shadow of certain catastrophe from the nation.

On the 10th the Israeli counterattack began. By early afternoon precisely 4 days after the Syrians had launched their avalanche against Israel not one of their tanks remained in fighting condition in Israeli territory. Strewn along the route of Israeli advance were 837 destroyed enemy tanks, over 3,000 personnel carriers, hundreds of antitank guns, and vast piles of military equipment. The Syrians had thrown all they had into the offensive, with every advantage of numbers, surprise, and equipment – and now the pride of their army lay smoking and ruined on the Golan.

Full if belated mobilization had its effect on the northern front. By October 9-10, Israel had forced the Syrians back to the initial cease-fire lines. Nevertheless, it was recognized that the Syrian army could not be allowed to recover and absorb equipment pouring in from the Soviet Union. On the evening of the tenth the general staff agreed that it was necessary to penetrate at least 12 miles beyond the cease-fire line. Only then could the Syrians be neutralized as a factor in the war.

The Seventh Armored Brigade was given the honors and in less than 24 hours the Syrians showed signs of breaking. By October 18, Israel commanded the flat terrain extending to the outskirts of Damascus only 22 miles away. The suburbs of the city lay within artillery range. It was a good place to consolidate forces. Although Arab counterattacks were mounted each day thereafter against the Israeli wedge, the Jews launched no further offensive action against the Syrian capital.

On the night of October 20, orders were transmitted to recapture the heights of Mt. Hermon. This was accomplished by the dawn of October 22. The radar eyes of Israel had been restored.
Southern War with Egypt

230 miles to the southwest during the same grim hours of October 6-7 the Israelis were tasting the power of one of the largest standing armies of the world. Positioned along the Canal were five Egyptian infantry divisions, three mixed infantry and tank divisions, and twenty-two independent infantry, commando, and paratroop brigades. With the air force, the enemy constituted not less than 600,000 men, 2,000 tanks, 2,300 artillery pieces, 160 SAM missile batteries, and 550 combat planes.

Facing this war machine in the Sinai along the 110 miles of Canal were precisely 436 Israeli soldiers in a series of bunkers seven to 10 miles apart, together with three tanks and 7 artillery batteries.

At 2:00pm on October 6, as Sadat’s planes attacked air bases and radar stations behind the Israeli lines, the full weight of Egyptian artillery opened up along the entire front, including volleys of long range Frog missiles. For the next 53 minutes the skeletal Israeli contingents in the east bank fortifications endured the murderous shelling.

When the barrage reached its crescendo, the first wave of 8,000 Egyptian infantry moved across the waterway in fiberglass boats. There was little that the shell-shocked Israeli reservists in the fortifications could do to halt the crossings. By nightfall no fewer than 30,000 Egyptian infantrymen had attained a foothold throughout the eastern length of the Canal; some units had pushed forward to a depth of three miles.

That night eleven pontoon bridges went up across the water, and tanks began moving over. Within 24 hours of the initial offensive, five Egyptian infantry and armored divisions had taken up positions three miles east of the Canal, entirely outflanking the Bar-Lev line, which they anticipated taking at their convenience.

It was a surprising achievement. General Shazli had expected his army to suffer as many as 10,000 casualties. Instead Egyptian dead in the first stage totaled 180 men.

As the Israelis withdrew, the Egyptians turned their attention to the remnants of the Bar-Lev fortifications. Five had been overrun at the outset, six had been evacuated. Only nine bunkers continued to hold out.

At headquarters, staff officers wept, aware that all rescue efforts would now be futile. The defenders were given permission to surrender. All but one of them did. The position at Port Fuad held out until the end of the war.

Early on October 9, the counterattack in the southern sector had begun. Israeli forces were resuming their traditional coordination and flair. However, this initial attempt to destroy the Egyptian foothold failed with heavy losses. Thus on October 10 the battle lines stabilized with Israel holding its own on the Golan and the Egyptians temporarily
digging in east of the Suez Canal. At this time 70,000 enemy troops had crossed the waterway and had established an unbroken front 6 miles in depth.

By October 14 the Israelis had reinforced their strength with 430 tanks. At dawn on the fourteenth, preceded by a 90 minute artillery bombardment, the Egyptians launched their full strength westward. The Israelis saw a huge cloud of dust moving toward them. The battle lasted half a day, and it was a slaughter; over 250 Egyptian tanks were destroyed within the first two hours of combat. When the Egyptians attempted to bring infantry forward with their armor hundreds of their personnel carriers were similarly liquidated. The expert Israeli tankers then cut off the retreat of the Egyptian stragglers, knocking out another 55 tanks without a single loss of their own. The firing died down by 3:00pm. Israel had won an armored victory that exceeded Montgomery’s triumph over Rommel in WWII.

In addition, a seam had opened up between the Egyptian Second Army in the north and the Third Army in the south. By “coincidence” this seam coincided with a staging area that Ariel Sharon had prepared years before. This staging area had been developed in 1968 as part of Israeli preparations to counterattack across the Canal if needed.

A crossing was authorized. Ariel Sharon would take a brigade across. The crossing went poorly. By 9:00am on October 15 a mere 30 tanks and 2,000 men had reached the West bank of the Canal. However, the Egyptian command, when informed of the small numbers, assumed that a small Israeli raiding party was running loose. They didn’t bother to react. By October 17 Israeli tanks had fought their way to the crossing point, pontoon bridges were erected and Israeli tanks began to rumble en masse into Egypt. Only then did Cairo wake up to the fact that Sharon’s initial small crossing was far more than a raid.

Israeli armor began systematically destroying Egyptian missile batteries, and tearing holes in Egyptian air defenses. The divisions ground ahead at full tilt through the Egyptian Third Armies west bank supply lines.

On the morning of October 22 the UN approved a Soviet and American appeal for a cease-fire to go into effect in 12 hours. Israel accepted the cease-fire on the same day as did Jordan and Egypt.

The cease-fire deadline found the Egyptian Third Army hopelessly trapped, with its supply lines cut and large numbers of troops fleeing in disorder. 8,000 were already prisoners. Under these circumstances the Egyptians ignored the cease-fire and struck repeatedly at the Israelis in an effort to open up an exit corridor.

A new cease-fire was proposed for October 24. It was accepted and Israel fought up to the last moment. When the fighting stopped 3 divisions had penetrated 25 miles into Egypt, dominating the southern half of the west bank. On the east bank Egyptian forces were deployed along the Bar-Lev line to a depth of 3-5 miles.
In the last analysis, the Israeli armed force had won the most striking victory in their history. It is worth recalling that the combined Arab forces actually had launched their offensive with more troops and weapons than those available to NATO in Europe – and this against a small country with a population unready and an army unmobilized. Despite the fury of the war, the surprise attack on two fronts, the incomparable advantages in Arab manpower and military equipment, Israel had held out, and eventually its forces had penetrated well beyond the enemies borders. Again, if we really look, we unquestionably see the hand of God controlling the events and protecting His people.

The Egyptians suffered 7,700 combat dead, the Syrians 3,500. The Israeli’s held 9,000 POWs of whom 8,000 were Egyptian. The combined Arab forces had lost some 2,000 tanks and over 500 planes compared to Israel’s loss of 804 tanks and 114 planes. Israel lost 2,552 dead and over 3,000 wounded in the 18 days of fighting.

Strategically, little was accomplished. Both sides eventually withdrew to approximately the same lines that existed before the war.
The First Regathering: Zionism and the Modern State of Israel

Ben-Gurion dies

In November, 87 year old David Ben-Gurion was stricken by a cerebral hemorrhage at his desert kibbutz of Sde Boker. He was rushed to Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem. After lingering 2½ weeks he died on December 1, 1973.

1975 – UN Resolution 3379: Zionism is racism

In early July, 1975, the UN International Women’s Year Conference in Mexico City issued a declaration, sponsored by 77 “nonaligned” countries, calling for the elimination of Zionism as one of the world’s “great evils. Along with colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism, foreign domination and occupation, apartheid, and racial discrimination ... “ And the Third World offensive had only begun. If the Arabs and their supporters failed in the summer of 1975 to evict Israel from the United Nations, they accomplished essentially the same objective, that of isolating Israel diplomatically.

On November 10, 1975, barely 28 years after voting to establish a Jewish state, the UN General Assembly endorsed a resolution describing Israel as “the racist regime in occupied Palestine,” and stigmatizing Zionism as “a form of racialism and racial discrimination.” The resolution’s preamble additionally singled out Zionism as “a threat to world peace and security.”

The U.S. stridently opposed “this infamous act,” but the resolution was approved by a vote of 72 to 35, with 32 abstentions.35

On December 5, the Assembly went so far as to order Israel to return all occupied Arab land without qualification (that is without qualification of peace treaties), and to restore the “legitimate rights of the Palestinians.”36

In the 1980’s Israel experienced a steady improvement in international standing. As the Madrid Peace Conference approached, “Israel conditioned UN participation in the peace process on the revocation of General Assembly Resolution 3379 (Zionism = Racism) and this was done on December 16, 1991.”37

1977 – Likud comes to power

Amid the turmoil of contending parties, the 1977 electoral campaign gave every appearance of following earlier precedents, of turning into a contest between three major blocs. The largest bloc was the Labor dominated “Alignment.” The other end of the

35 *The People’s Chronology* is licensed from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright © 1992 by James Trager. All rights reserved.

36 *A History of Israel*, vol. 1, pg. 826-827

37 *Encyclopedia Judaica, Decennial Book*, pg. 209
political spectrum was the conservative Likud party under the leadership of Menachem Begin. Finally, there were the religious parties.

Labor members such as Yigal Allon and Abba Eban favored a substantial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Begin on the other hand perceived of an “undivided land of Israel.”

When the votes were counted, Likud was found to have increased its Knesset representation from 39 to 43 seats. The National Religious Party had enlarged its delegation form 10 to 12 seats. Labor had lost one-third of its strength. Never before in Israel’s history had there been such a shift away from the Labor party.

**Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visits Jerusalem**

The shift of Israel’s political and economic course in 1977 was prefigured by a striking, and by no means dissimilar, reorientation in Egypt. Anwar al-Sadat orchestrated the change personally. With his reputation at new heights following the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, the Egyptian president felt secure enough to embark on a far-reaching overhaul of Egyptian society, a “liberalization in all fields.”

The new liberalization of course affected the economic field. Sadat wanted to introduce Western style capitalism. He knew this could only be achieved through peace. To foster his vision of national revival, Sadat made the calculated decision on June, 1975 to open the Suez Canal. Sadat insisted that economic viability could not be reconciled with the burden of remaining on a perpetual war footing, keeping 700,000 men under arms. The successful military crossing of the canal appeared to fortify the nation’s desire for peace. With their honor restored, the Egyptian people found less humiliation in contemplating a new relationship with the enemy.

Sadat explained his approach succinctly in his autobiographical work, *In Search of Identity*.

> We have recovered our pride and self-confidence after the October, 1973 battle, just as our armed forces did. We are no longer motivated by “complexes” – whether defeatist “inferiority” ones or those born out of suspicion and hate. And this is why the opposing sides met soon after the battle dust had settled to talk matters over … With the fighting over, we harbored nothing but respect for one another.

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38 Sachar, *A History of Israel*, vol. 2, pg. 23
39 Sachar, *A History of Israel*, vol. 2, pg. 41
40 Sachar, *A History of Israel*, vol. 2, pg. 42
The inauguration of a new administration in Washington added a unique momentum to the search for Middle Eastern peace. **Jimmy Carter** entered the White House in January, 1977.

As he evaluated his future course, Sadat was presented with an unexpected opening by the Israelis. It happened that, upon forming his cabinet Menachem Begin had astonished his colleagues and the nation at large by his choice for foreign minister. It was Moshe Dayan.

Upon assuming office Begin shared an interest in a trade off. What he had in mind was an Israeli free hand in Judea and Samaria for a state of non-belligerency with Egypt. Dayan with his record as a dove in Sinai and a hawk in the West Bank would be indispensable to Begin in selling the idea of such a tradeoff – first to Egypt, then to Israel.

Begin set about dispatching signals to Cairo of his willingness to strike a deal. Dayan ordered the draft of a possible Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The paper was sent off to Washington for examination. US endorsement was regarded as indispensable for leverage with the Arab enemy.

As Dayan hoped, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and his advisors were impressed enough to request the president’s personal intervention with the Egyptians. Carter agreed.

On September 10, 1977, the document was sent to Cairo, followed by a private letter from Carter to Sadat. The president asked Sadat to test Begin’s sincerity.

At that point, in May, 1977, General Yitzchak Chofi, director of the Mossad (Israel’s CIA) uncovered information of a Libyan assassination plot against Sadat. Begin decided to convey the information to the Egyptians. “That may warm the atmosphere between us,” he suggested. Morocco’s King Hassan was regarded as a valuable conduit for the information.

In June, 1977, convinced that the moment for peace was ripe, Hassan was prepared to serve as intermediary. He proved to be an effective one. Through the Moroccan ambassador in Cairo, the Egyptians were informed that Israel possessed vital security information. Inasmuch as the data could only be transmitted directly, the king arranged a meeting in Casablanca between General Chofi and Egypt’s director of military intelligence, Lieutenant General Kamal Hassan Ali. Hassan Ali was stunned by the detailed evidence that Israeli brought with him, including names and addresses of the Palestinian assassins in Cairo. Acting on the information the Egyptian secret police seized the conspirators with extensive incriminating documents and weapons. Sadat was genuinely grateful.
The Egyptian president accordingly sent word through Morocco that he was prepared to listen to serious Israeli proposals. On November 9, 1977, Sadat announced that he was willing to go to the Israeli parliament and discuss Israeli withdrawal from Sinai.

The impact of that statement was stunning. In Israel Begin was astounded. He had anticipated private talks. But a public, ceremonial visit by an Egyptian president to Jerusalem? The prospect seemed all but unimaginable. The prime minister was on the state radio the next day, issuing an open invitation to Sadat to come to Israel. Five days later, in a note communicated through the US embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo, Begin formally and officially invited the Egyptian leader to address the Knesset on November 20. Sadat accepted on the spot.

On November 20, 1977, Sadat faced the Knesset with a 40 minute address. In his speech Sadat offered Israel the inducement its people had waited 30 years to hear;

In all sincerity I tell you that we welcome you among us with full security and safety ... We used to reject you ... We had our reasons and our fears, yes ... [but] I declare to the whole world that we accept living with you in permanent peace based on justice ... Today, through my visit to you I ask you, why do we not stretch out our hands with faith and sincerity so that together we might remove all suspicion of fear, betrayal and bad intentions?41

41 Sachar, A History of Israel, vol. 2, pg. 51
Upon his return, Sadat’s reception in Cairo was tumultuous. Nearly a million people cheered him on his open-car journey from the airport. However, initial discussions were agonizing for both sides and soon Egypt and Israel were at an impasse.

1978 – Camp David Accords

It was the very lack of success that brought into play a critical procedural agreement between the Israelis and the Egyptians. Sadat and Begin consented to discuss their outstanding differences jointly with President Jimmy Carter at the presidential retreat of Camp David. It would take place at the urgent request of Jimmy Carter himself.

Aware that the two Middle Eastern governments were reaching a possibility irreconcilable standoff, the American president was determined that the momentum for peace between them would now have to be restored, if necessary, by exercising the fullest political influence of the most powerful country in the world.

On September 5, 1978, Sadat and Begin arrived at Camp David. Eventually, after hard and emotional negotiations, two agreements were hammered out. One was entitled a “Framework for Peace in the Middle East and the other a “Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel.”

The arrangements were good for both sides. The Egyptians were guaranteed return of all their land. The Israelis would gradually return all of the Sinai to Egypt and normalized relations between the two countries would gradually phase in. A three stage negotiation framework for “the Palestinian problem in all its aspects” was outlined as well.

The Camp David accords represented an impressive diplomatic breakthrough for each of the participants. On September 17, 1978, a televised ceremony of signing took place at the White House. President Carter himself observed that a formal peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was to be negotiated and completed within the next three months. The road to peace now seemed dramatically shorter.

Sadat was a hero when he arrived home. In late November, the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Sadat and Begin.

A hair raising road to peace still remained. The initial euphoria died away in Egypt and serious opposition surfaced regarding the Camp David Accords. Bowing to the pressure Sadat altered his understanding of the agreement. By December, when the peace treaty was originally scheduled to be signed, the likelihood of peace appeared dim.
1979 – Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty signed

In March 1979, President Carter, “in an act of desperation” decided to travel personally to Egypt and Israel in an effort to achieve a final breakthrough. A hectic five days of negotiations in Cairo and Jerusalem concluded with a peace treaty. On March 22, 1979, by a margin of 95 to 18 Israel’s parliament voted to ratify the peace pact. Four days later on March 26, 1979, in a White House ceremony, Sadat and Begin placed their signatures on a formal treaty of peace between the two nations.

The document terminated the state of war between Egypt and Israel. Israel undertook to withdraw all its armed forces from the Sinai. Egypt pledged itself to use Israel’s evacuated airfields in the peninsula exclusively for civilian purposes. Each party agreed to respect the other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and its right to live in peace within “secure and recognized boundaries.” Each undertook to conduct normal, diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with each other and to remove all discriminatory barriers to the free movement of people and goods.

1981 – Iraq’s nuclear reactor destroyed by Israeli Air Force

In 1974 the Saddam Hussein government in Iraq began making plans to go nuclear. Saddam Hussein set about promoting his own brand of pan-Arab “socialism” throughout the Middle East through subversion and terror. Those close to the man regarded him a the logical heir of Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Saddam intended to widen his influence as Nasser never had by becoming the first Arab leader to command a nuclear arsenal.

Iraq was able to rely on cooperation from France. By 1978 misgivings were developing even within the French foreign ministry. The contract with Iraq promised delivery not only of two nuclear plants but of nuclear fuel enriched with uranium 235. The fuel was to be shipped in six installments of 13 kilos each, with the entire consignment to be delivered by 1981. This was sufficient uranium for the manufacture of nine weapons.
The Israelis decided to adopt vigorous countermeasures of their own. In April, 1979, saboteurs broke into a warehouse near Toulon and blew up the casings for Iraq’s first reactor. The components had been scheduled for shipment that week. New casings were delivered in the autumn of 1979.

The first installment of enriched uranium reached Iraq in June, 1980. After three more shipments the Iraqis would be able to irradiate enough fuel from their reactor to produce weapons-grade plutonium. By the mid-1980’s the Saddam Hussein regime would be expected to possess a stockpile of at least 6 atomic bombs. One way or another, Saddam Hussein’s nuclear program would have to be stopped.

Menachem Begin desired an aerial bombardment of the Osiraq reactor. The raid was set for June 7. Preparations began and continued through the winter and spring of 1981.

On June 7, 1981 at 4:00pm, eight Israeli F-16’s took off from their base. The planes were provided with extra fuel tanks and special bomb racks that carried two, 2,000 pound MK-84 “iron” bombs. Once airborne, the F-16’s moved into formation with an escort of six F-14 fighter-interceptors. The Israelis also readied an unknown number of other planes, including F-15s equipped with oversized tanks to provide aerial refueling.

The trip would cover more than 1,000 miles to the target and back. The distance would stretch the F-16’s range to the limit. Any deviation from the plan, any battle with enemy planes, would require additional fuel. Refueling would have to take place over Arab territory. No room for error existed.

The main force of eight F-16s and six F-15s accordingly headed east across the Gulf of Aqaba and along the northern width of Saudi Arabia near the border with Jordan. Military intelligence had selected the route after identifying its occasional radar blind spots. The attack group flew in tightly bunched formations, to project the radar “signature” of a large commercial aircraft. Crossing Saudi and Jordanian airspace into Iraq the planes sped on past Baghdad to Tuwaitah, and approached low to avoid detection.

One of the F-15s initially overflew the Osiraq reactor to draw antiaircraft fire. Meanwhile, the F-16s had swept up into the sky to allow the pilots to aim. With the setting sun behind them, they dived into the target, sending the bombs hurtling against the reactor’s concrete-and-lead protective dome. The tactic had been refined during months of practice against a mock-up in the Sinai.

The first bombs were fitted with delayed-action fuses, allowing them to penetrate the dome before exploding, opening gaping holes in the side. The next bombs struck only moments later, finding the hole with “stupefying accuracy,” in the words of a French observer, and destroying the reactor inside. One French technician was killed in the attack. Iraqi antiaircraft fire spattered harmlessly. All Israeli planes returned safely.
Was the raid justified? From all evidence, the Iraqis were indeed moving toward the production of atomic weaponry.

The air strike’s diplomatic “fallout” was far-reaching. President Reagan at first condoned, then criticized the attack both in official statements and in his support of a UN Security Council resolution of condemnation. A scheduled shipment of F-16 aircraft to Israel was halted. Israel’s violation of Saudi air space multiplied Saudi appeals for effective radar protection.

If the air attack reaped criticism on the international scene, there was one area at least in which Begin achieved substantial success. This was in Israel itself. Here, news of the bombing evoked widespread admiration as a legitimate act of self-defense. The sheer audaciousness of the raid, no less than the brilliance of its execution, visibly enhanced the prime minister’s political standing only days before the Knesset election.
1982 – Israel’s withdrawal from Sinai completed
Early in June of 1982, Israel’s borders with the neighboring Arab countries were reasonably quiet. The southern frontier with Egypt was altogether in a state of peace. If the West Bank trembled in barely suppressed ferment, infiltration from Jordan, at least, had all but ended since 1970. To the northeast, Syria remained irredeemably hostile, but not a single episode of truce violation had occurred along the Golan since the 1974 disengagement agreement, not even since Israel’s annexation of this critical buffer plateau in December, 1981.

Menachem Begin’s attention was transfixed, rather by Lebanon, the smallest and weakest of Israel’s neighbors. Throughout May and June of 1981, the Israeli air force periodically attacked guerrilla positions in Lebanon. When the guerrillas lashed back with a rocket barrage against Naharia, a middle sized northern Israeli town, air force jets escalated the level of violence in a heavy retaliatory bombardment of PLO headquarters in Beirut, killing some 100 people and wounding at least 600 others. Hereupon the PLO launched into an even more prolonged Katyusha rocketing of Galilee settlements.

The PLO leadership subsequently built their front-line strength in south Lebanon to the equivalent of five infantry brigades. The PLO force could increase Katyusha and artillery salvos, its fedayun raids, even its amphibious forays against Israel’s 63 Galilee settlements and coastal towns.

For Chief of Staff Eytan, the evidence was compelling that only a larger-scale military operation could eradicate the danger. The catalyst for the invasion was provided in an unexpected site. In June 3, 1982, the De La Rue Group, a British printing and publishing conglomerate, held a banquet at London’s Dorchester Hotel. The 400 guests included industrialists and several ambassadors. One of the ambassadors was Shlomo Argov of Israel. When the banquet ended, Argov left the hotel shortly before 11:00pm. A young Palestinian, Hassan Said, carrying a shoulder bag, had been loitering on the street outside for nearly an hour. As the ambassador entered his limousine, Said removed a submachine gun from the bag and fired one shot from a distance of 15 feet. Argov was struck in the head and collapsed. He survived, but was paralyzed.

The following day, the Israeli air force began massive bombardment of PLO targets in Lebanon, battering arms depots and military camps the entire distance up to Beirut. The reaction of individual PLO factions was to launch a sporadic shelling of Israeli settlements in the Galilee.

At an emergency cabinet meeting of June 5, Begin insisted that the army would have to strike immediately to activate a long-prepared strategy of clearing a 25 mile wide strip along the Lebanese border. If this were accomplished, the PLO’s artillery would be pushed decisively beyond range of Israel’s northern settlements. Assurance was given that Beirut was not an objective. The operation “Operation Peace for Galilee” would be
completed within two or three days. The cabinet then gave its approval. So did Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin of the Labor party when they were informed by Begin.

On June 6, 1982, three Israeli divisions closed in on the Palestinians from all sides. Up the coastal road, by amphibious forces landed between Sidon and Damour, by a division sent into the central sector through the Shouf Mountains. Advance was rapid. On the third day, June 8, Israeli troops were already beyond the 25 mile security zone that had been the declared objective of Operation Peace for Galilee.

On June 7, Israel troops attacked Syrian units at Djezzin, a junction controlling access to the southern Bek’a Valley. It was a costly full-scale battle. Calling up reinforcements, the Syrians launched a heavy counterattack of their own. The inflicted serious casualties on the Israelis, whose armored column was stopped in its tracks.

Air supremacy was vital and here no alternative existed but to strike directly against the SAM-6 missiles placed in the valley. Ariel Sharon, the defense minister, argued that bombardment of the missiles was necessary to minimize Israeli casualties in the Lebanese coastal zone. Begin supported this argument. After only a brief hesitation, the cabinet members approved the attack, with the understanding that they also had endorsed a major ground operation against a powerful Syrian army.

An June 9, the Israelis launched their attack. Wave after wave of planes came over, F-15s flying top cover, F-16s carrying bombs, and a Hawkeye command plane, crowded with electronic gear, directing operations and jamming the Syrian radar. The SAMs were launched. They failed to register a single hit. Conversely, 17 of the 19 missile batteries were knocked out by Israeli bombs. The following day, another wave of Israeli jets finished the job, destroying the remaining batteries.

Almost as costly for the Syrians was the beating taken by their air force. During the first Israeli attack on the missiles, the Syrians came in with their MiG-25 interceptors. The Israelis shot down 22 of these without a loss. The next day, in a second attack, another 24 Syrian jets were destroyed, again without Israeli losses. In the ensuing days, nearly 50 additional Syrian fighters would be downed without cost to the Israelis.

As early a the night of June 9-10, the Israeli air force was free to ravage the Syrians on the ground. It was after these 48 hours of disaster that the Syrians decided to pull out of active fighting entirely. Despite its loss of SAM missiles and, ultimately, of more than 100 planes, the Assad regime understood that the war was being fought in Lebanon, not in Syria, and that the Israelis were not interested in penetrating Syrian territory.

The war suddenly appeared much more far-reaching that the Israeli cabinet or people had been led to anticipate. So it did to the Great Powers. On the morning of June 10, Reagan dispatched and urgent message to Begin, pointing out that Israel’s incursion into Lebanon already far transcended Jerusalem’s originally announced purpose. Israel would have to
accede to a cease-fire immediately, the president warned. The prime minister and his cabinet agreed to a cease fire for noon the next day, June 11.

The Israeli government ignored Yasser Arafat’s announced willingness to participate in the June 11 truce, observing that his guerrilla force was not a responsible government, but a band of terrorists. Emphasizing the point, Israeli forces, on June 12, launched into a sustained air, land, and sea bombardment of Palestinian strongholds South and west of Beirut.

On June 13, several key objectives of Operation Peace for Galilee had been reached. The PLO infrastructure south of Beirut had been destroyed. The Syrians had been soundly thrashed, if not evicted from Lebanon. They had captured vast quantities of PLO equipment.

After inventory was completed in October, the list of PLO material included 1,320 armored combat vehicles, among them several hundred obsolete tanks, 82 artillery pieces, 62 Katyusha rocket launchers, 215 mortars, 196 antiaircraft guns, 1,342 antitank weapons, 33,000 small arms and thousands of pieces of communications equipment.

Jerusalem contended that the destruction of the PLO in south Lebanon was an act of liberation. The claim seemed borne out by local Arab reaction to the Israeli invasion. Foreign journalists confirmed that the inhabitants of south Lebanon were euphoric at the destruction of the Palestinian guerrilla forces. Shia Moslems and Christians alike vied with each other in welcoming Israeli troops, inviting Israeli officers into their homes. When the Israeli army “detained” 9,000 PLO suspects, Christian and Shia villagers eagerly helped in the task of identification.

The cost to the Palestinians – PLO fighters and noncombatants alike – was quite terrible. Estimates later put the number of Palestinian dead in south Lebanon’s refugee camps at over 6,000. Israeli troops who entered these complexes afterward were aghast at the carnage wreaked by the bombardments. They were shocked, too, by the vindictiveness of the Christian and Shia authorities, who refused the Red Cross permission to set up tent shelters for Palestinian victims. Israel lost 130 dead and 600 wounded. News of these losses set off widening tremors of concern in Israel.
THE War in Lebanon, 6 June 1982 - 21 August 1982

Following the attempted assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to London, Shlomo Argov, on 3 June 1982, and renewed PLO shelling of northern Israel, Israeli forces launched 'Operation Peace for Galilee' on 6 June 1982. Fighting continued until 21 August 1982. Following the start of direct Lebanese-Israeli talks on 28 December 1982, agreement was signed on 17 May 1983 for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. The Syrian Government, however, rejected the call for the withdrawal of Syrian troops.

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Operation Big Pines

After a week of war, Israel’s army was in effective occupation of southern Lebanon. Its tanks and self propelled guns surrounded Beirut, trapping some 15,000 Palestinian guerrillas intermingled in the western part of the city among a half-million local Moslems. Now was the time for Ariel Sharon to set in motion “Operation Big Pines,” his carefully guarded master plan for smashing the PLO infrastructure in Beirut.

In Sharon’s scenario, the destruction of the PLO quasi government in Lebanon would shatter Yasser Arafat’s influence among the inhabitants of the West Bank. It was an audacious scheme, one that far transcended the officially proclaimed goal of Operation Peace for Galilee. Now was the moment too, under the protection of Israeli air and artillery power for the Phalangist forces to send their militias directly into West Beirut and complete the rout of the PLO.

Here the arrangements hung fire. Despite heavy pressure from Sharon the Phalangist leadership refrained from military action. The Israeli command soon faced a painful decision. Their troops had pushed too far to leave the PLO enclave intact. Yet the notion of moving directly into the city and using troops in bitter street fighting was unacceptable. Accordingly, after a few days of hesitation, Eytan and his staff came up with an alternative, one that gained cabinet approval. It was to uproot the PLO guerrillas by siege, by heavy aerial and artillery bombardment, by halting munitions and food supplies.

During the next 2 months, some 400 Israeli tanks and 1,000 guns poured salvo after salvo into West Beirut. For the first time in the nations long series of wars against the Arabs, Israel’s air force bombed an enemy capitol systematically. Bu the first week in July, some 500 buildings had been destroyed by shells and bombs.

In the world’s first manhunt by air, the Israelis also nearly succeeded in killing Arafat. On four different occasions, with information provided by their own spies and local informers, they bombed or rocketed targets less than an hour after Arafat’s departure.

As Sharon had hoped, the pulverizing siege rapidly became unendurable for the Palestinian guerrillas. In late June Arafat let it be known that the was prepared to withdraw his men from the city, if appropriate terms and guarantees could be worked out. The Israelis rejected all qualifications.

43 infrastructure (ín`fri-strük cher) noun: 1) An underlying base or foundation especially for an organization or a system; 2) The basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communications systems, water and power lines, and public institutions including schools, post offices, and prisons. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition is licensed from Houghton Mifflin Company. Copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.
To intensify the pressure, Israeli troops, on August 4, 1982, took over Beirut’s international airport, then began inching forward selectively into the western part of the city. The air force meanwhile carried out its single heaviest bombing of the war – 127 sorties in 10 hours. Simultaneously, naval vessels offshore joined in the bombardment, launching Gabriel missiles into West Beirut. Arafat was completely unnerved by then.

It wasn’t Israel’s hard stance alone that eroded his confidence. Where would his troops go? Not a single Arab country was willing, at first, to offer the Palestinians sanctuary.

On August 12, Sharon ordered and unprecedented saturation bombing of West Beirut. It continued for nearly a day, and killed at least 300 people. The August 12 saturation attack inflicted a particularly severe blow on Israel’s image in the democratic world. Western newspaper and television reportage gave a sharply biased account of the war often accepting PLO figures on Lebanese and Palestinian dead and wounded. Journalists drew analogies between the “genocide” of Beirut and the genocide of Warsaw in WWII.

Finally, an evacuation of PLO troops was scheduled to begin on August 21, 1982, and to end on September 4. Remarkably, all went according to plan. PLO troops were hooted and jeered by thousands of Christian Lebanese onlookers. The long years of PLO intimidation and terrorism appeared to be ending. During those 12 days, some 14,000 Palestinian and Syrian fighters were evacuated from the capital, either by sea or overland by the Beirut-Damascus highway.

The following map will summarize “Operation Big Pines.” Israel eventually withdrew from Lebanon, but slowly, over the years, border attacks resumed, now by Hezbollah.
The First Regathering: Zionism and the Modern State of Israel


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Hezbollah: Identity and goals (edited from the Hezbollah.org website)

Hezbollah is an Islamic struggle movement. Its emergence is based on an ideological, social, political and economical mixture in a special Lebanese, Arab and Islamic context. As a result of this background Hezbollah went through various decisive moments in its history. With the most important moment being in 1982 the year of the Zionist invasion of Lebanon. This invasion led to the occupation of the capital Beirut making it the second Arab capital to be occupied during the Arab-“Israeli” conflict, with Jerusalem being the first. This crossroad speeded up the presence of Hezbollah as a struggle movement that is totally affiliated in the long complicated and complex fight against the Zionist enemy. The starting point of that struggle being the Zionist occupation of Palestine, …

It was not by sheer coincidence that Hezbollah turned into a struggle movement against the “Israeli” occupation. Because Hezbollah’s ideological ideals sees no legitimacy for the existence of “Israel” … And the conflict becomes one of legitimacy that is based on religious ideals.

Another of its ideals is the establishment of an Islamic Government.

The Islamic Resistance was able to direct very painful blows to the Zionist enemy forcing them to withdraw step by step. One of the principal withdrawals is that of 1985 leading up to the withdrawal from the Christian area Jezzine. And finally leaving the enemy with no choice but to withdraw completely as a final solution to their problems.

Hezbollah also used one of its own special types of resistance against the Zionist enemy that is the suicide attacks. These attacks dealt great losses to the enemy on all thinkable levels such as militarily and mentally. The attacks also raised the moral across the whole Islamic nation.

Today, Hezbollah is one of the most prominent Lebanese political parties that has its presence in the parliament with 8 MPs.

Hezbollah also sees itself committed in introducing the true picture of Islam, the Islam that is logical. Committed to introduce the civilized Islam to humanity.

It should also be clear that the kind of Islam that Hezbollah seeks is a civilized one that refuses any kind of oppression, degradation, subjugation and colonization. Hezbollah also stretches its arm of friendship to all on the basis of mutual self-respect.

Hezbollah does not wish to implement Islam forcibly but in a peaceful and political manner, that gives the chance to the majority to either accept or refuse. If Islam becomes the choice of the majority only then will it be implemented. If not it will then continue to co-exist with others on the basis of mutual understanding using peaceful methods to reach peaceful solutions. And that is how the case should be to the non-Islamists as well.
1987 – Hamas Founded

A Guide to Hamas
(For the full unedited article see Jewishpost.com)
By: Bluma Zuckerbrot- Finkelstein, Director, Special Projects- Middle East
for the National Office of the Anti-Defamation League

… Hamas is simultaneously a terrorist organization and a mass social, political and religious movement.

Hamas—an Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement meaning "zeal"—was created in Gaza by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin shortly before the intifada as a more militant, Palestinian offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, a religious, political and social movement founded in Egypt and dedicated to the gradual victory of Islam. … Hamas rendered the Brotherhood's policy of gradual Islamicization ineffectual and advocated an immediate holy war to liberate Palestine.

Hamas is divided into political and military branches with the former directing Hamas' vast social service network. The Military branch (founded by Salah Shehadeh) is reportedly divided into three wings: an intelligence arm, which gathers information about Palestinians suspected of collaboration, an arm which pursues those who have violated Islamic law and the Izzedine al-Qassam squads who are responsible for most of the terror attacks.

Hamas preaches and engages in violence and terror in order to destroy the state of Israel and replace it with an Islamic state. Its virulent hatred of Jews and Judaism is deeply rooted in the anti-Semitic writings of Muslim Brotherhood theologians. In August 1988, Hamas issues its covenant laying down its ideological principles and goals. Replete with anti-Semitism, it echoes the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion and charges Jews with an international conspiracy to gain control of the world. In Hamas' worldview, Islamic precepts forbid a Jewish state in the area known as Palestine, the Jewish people have no legitimate connection to the land of Israel and Yasir Arafat is a traitor to the Islamic Palestinian cause. As its covenant proclaims, "The land of Palestine is an Islamic trust...It is forbidden to anyone to yield or concede any part of it...Israel will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it..."

Hamas launched its campaign of violence in 1989, first against Israeli soldiers and suspected Palestinian collaborators and then against Israeli civilians. In the wake of the Oslo agreement, Hamas leaders intensified their rhetoric and vowed to derail the peace process through violent attacks. Drive-by shootings, firebombings and stabbings increased and suicide missions began in April 1994, when a Hamas suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into a bus in Afula killing eight and wounding 50 others.
Through systematic indoctrination, social pressure, and the promise of paradise, Hamas religious and military leaders recruit young, poor men for suicide missions and other attacks. 45

**Intifada begins**

On December 9, 1987 an uprising, known as the Intifada, began in the Gaza Strip. Before too long it had expanded throughout the Arab-populated areas of the West Bank. "It was led by young Palestinians who despaired of the prolonged Israeli occupation, the political deadlock, their own frustrations with both the local Palestinian leadership and that of the PLO, and their despair over the failure of the Arab states to resolve the plight."46

The snapping point came on December 9th when “an Israeli truck ran over four Arab workers from the Gaza region as they returned from work in Israel. Three days earlier an Israeli merchant had been stabbed to death in Gaza, and a rumor ran among the Arab populace that the traffic accident was really an Israeli act of revenge.”47

Attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians then commenced. The Arab residents of the West Bank used whatever weapons were available to them. Most attacked by throwing rocks. However, knives, hatchets, gasoline bombs and even grenades were brought into play. Arab villages tried to prevent the entry of Israeli soldiers. Arab schoolchildren were encouraged to become actively involved by hurling stones as well as abuse.

The Israeli army struggled to regain control. Israeli troops broke up demonstrations and attacks by using tear gas, rubber and plastic bullets. Only under extreme provocation was live ammunition brought into play. Under conditions like this it was inevitable that excesses would occur. Several Israeli soldiers were found guilty of abusing their powers. The dangers became more acute when stabbing of Jews spread to Jewish urban areas.

Arabs accused of collaboration with the authorities suffered murder and mutilation by their fellow Arabs. For example, “between Jan 1991 and April 1993, 151 Israeli soldiers and civilians were killed in the Intifada, while 1,500 Palestinians were killed by their own brethren.”48

By April, 1993 the fires of the Intifada had all but burned themselves out.

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45 © Copyright, April 1996, The Jewish Post of New York Online
46 *Encyclopedia Judaica, Decennial Book*, pg. 197
47 *Encyclopedia Judaica, Decennial Book*, pg. 203
48 *Encyclopedia Judaica, Decennial Book*, pg. 197
1989 – Four-point peace initiative proposed by Israel

The onset of the Intifada in December, 1987, and the decision of the Reagan Administration to enter into a dialogue with the PLO in December, 1988, placed Israel in a difficult position forcing its government to come up with a new peace plan. This initiative, announced on May 14, 1989, called for negotiations with the Palestinians and for an interim agreement based on the Camp David autonomy plan. At the end of a five-year transition period, discussions would be held for the final resolution of the issues. The US welcomed the plan as a very useful step, but both the PLO and King Hussein of Jordan rejected it.

On October 8, US Secretary of State James Baker proposed a 5-point plan of talks between Israel and the Palestine delegation in Cairo. On Nov. 5th Israel’s inner cabinet gave conditional approval to Baker’s 5-point peace initiative: the US must provide assurances that there will be no negotiations with the PLO.

On August 2, 1990 the Iraqi army invaded Kuwait plunging the world into a crises that far overshadowed the Arab-Israeli situation. The face of peace would be completely altered in its aftermath.49

Mass immigration of Soviet Jews


49 Encyclopedia Judaica, Decennial Book, pg. 208
50 The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia is licensed from Columbia University Press. Copyright © 1991 by Columbia University Press. All rights reserved.
51 Encyclopedia Judaica, 1983-92 Decennial Book, pg. 211
52 Encyclopedia Judaica, 1983-92 Decennial Book, pg. 338
54 Encyclopedia Judaica, 1983-92 Decennial Book, pg. 338
1991 – Iraq attacks Israel with ground-to-ground missiles during Gulf War

Israel’s small size and her proximity to Arab States that since 1948 have refused to make peace with her, made her particularly vulnerable to air and missile attack. In Aug., 1990, Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait, which it had long claimed. The UN Security Council called for Iraq to withdraw and subsequently embargoed most trade with Iraq.

On Jan. 17, 1991, a U.S.-led coalition that included Britain, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, and other nations began a massive air war to destroy Iraq's forces and military and civil infrastructure. Iraq called for terrorist attacks against the coalition and launched missiles at Israel in an unsuccessful attempt to widen the war and break up the coalition.56

Iraqi missiles fell on Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, and Haifa. Urged to do so by the Western nations, Israel refrained from retaliation, even in self defense. In all 30 SCUD missiles hit Israel. Some were destroyed in the air by American-manned Patriot anti-missile missiles located near Tel Aviv. 4,000 Israeli apartments were totally destroyed. Only one civilian (51 year old Eitan Grunland) was killed when a missile hit his home in Ramat Aviv on January 25, 1991.57

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57 Atlas of the Arab Israeli Conflict, pg. 132
Israel's small size, and her proximity to Arab States that since 1948 have refused to make peace with her, made her particularly vulnerable to air and missile attack. During the Gulf War (January-February 1991) Iraqi missiles fell on Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan and Haifa. Urged to do so by the Western nations, Israel refrained from retaliation, even in self-defence. In all, 30 Scud missiles hit Israel. Some were destroyed in the air by American-manned Patriot anti-missile missiles located near Tel Aviv. Several missile sites in Iraq were destroyed on the ground by British commandos. Four thousand Israeli apartments were totally destroyed, but only one civilian (the 51-year-old Elan Grundland) was killed, when a missile hit his home in Ramat Aviv on 25 January 1991.

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Under American and Soviet auspices, Middle East peace conference convenes in Madrid

The Gulf War and the political collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) remolded the fundamental shape of politics in the Middle East. The modification in the political foundation of the region led to a reassessment by the Arab world of its relationship toward the State of Israel. The Arab nations reexamined Israel’s offer to enter into mutual peace negotiations and chose to collaborate with Israel in building a fresh future for the region.

In October, 1991, a meeting under Soviet and American auspices was assembled in Madrid, Spain, for the purpose of beginning direct, face-to-face discussions. The Madrid conference called together the appropriate nations for an opening interchange. The purpose was to inaugurate discussions regarding two independent but related subjects. Two party discussions and collective discussions began. This conference was simply an opening forum for all the participants. The Madrid Conference had no power to force solutions or prohibit agreements. The two party talks were geared to the resolution of the conflicts of the past. The collective talks aimed at developing the region in the future.

As a result of the Madrid Conference direct discussions between Israel and Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinians began on November 3, 1991. These talks boiled down to four independent sets of two party negotiations. The negotiations with Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan are designed to heal the injuries of the past and result in treaties of peace.

The discussions between Israel and the PLO are different in aim and scope. The consultations between Israel and the Palestinians contain a three step approach. The first step is geared to designing a transitional self-governing arrangement with the Palestinians. The second step revolves around a five year implementation period of those arrangements. In the third step, negotiations will concentrate on the permanent self-government issues.

The collective talks are designed to stabilize and build up the region for the long term future. The bargaining will deal with 5 key issues of concern to the entire Middle East – water utilization, environmental protection, military arms control and national security, refugee status and the economic progress of the entire area.59

59 *The Middle East Peace Process*, pg. 2-3
THE RESULTS OF THE MADRID CONFERENCE

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<td>The purpose of the bilateral negotiations is to resolve the conflicts of the past.</td>
<td>The purpose of the multilateral talks is to build the Middle East of the future.</td>
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<td>The goal of the talks with the Arab states is to conclude bilateral peace treaties.</td>
<td>Issues of regional concern are discussed in a forum that fosters cooperation and builds confidence between the parties.</td>
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<td>The talks with the Palestinians are aimed at achieving a settlement in two stages, over five years.</td>
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1992 – Diplomatic relations established with China and India

New Government headed by Yitzak Rabin of the Labor Party

The Labor Party of Yitzhak Rabin won a clear victory in elections held June 23, 1992. Rabin called for peace and reconciliation with Israel's Arab neighbors.60

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1993 – Israel and the PLO sign a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government Arrangements for the Palestinians

Ongoing peace talks produced historic agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in Sept., 1993 (Oslo Accords). The latter recognized Israel's right to exist, and Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians.

The two sides then signed, Sept. 13, an agreement for limited Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and in the West Bank, beginning with the city of Jericho. This agreement was know as the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (DOP).

The next day, Israel and Jordan signed a framework accord intended to pave the way for a future peace treaty. The agreement, known as the Common Agenda, embraces four subjects of concern: national security, water utilization, refugees and displaced persons, borders and territorial concerns. Israel and Jordan likewise agreed to investigate the likelihood cooperation in the future. Possible areas of future cooperation include such issues as economic teamwork, tourism, and natural resources.

Since the Madrid Conference, talks between Israel and Syria have been carried out. Israel has stated that she is willing to consider an element of withdrawal on the Golan Heights in the context of a peace settlement. Prime Minister Rabin has stated that should a peace treaty that includes a significant withdrawal on the Golan Heights be negotiated with Syria, the proposed treaty will be put to a national referendum (a national vote) before it is signed.

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62 The Middle East Peace Process, pg. 13

Shortly after signing the DOP, negotiations commenced in Cairo and Paris between Israeli and PLO delegations on the implementation of the first stage of the interim agreement. The negotiations were completed after 7 months of discussions. The Gaza-Jericho Agreement was signed in Cairo on May 4, 1994.

It applies to the Gaza Strip and to a defined area of about 65 square kilometers including Jericho and its suburbs. Israel is responsible for external security while the Palestinians are responsible for public order and internal security. The following points are also included 1) withdrawal of Israeli forces 2) security of Israelis 3) security of roads 4) safe passage 5) Palestinian prisoner release 6) legal matters 7) economic relations and 8) transfer of civil affairs to the Palestinian authority.

On the 29th of August the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers in the West Bank was implemented. The Palestinian Authority assumed responsibility for education, culture, health, social welfare, tourism and taxation.
**Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty**

King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Rabin declared an end to the state of war between the two states in Washington on July 25, 1994. A formal Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty was signed on October 26, 1994.
On the 29th of August the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers to the West Bank was implemented.
Nobel Prize

Amid caustic criticism the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, and PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

1995 – Hamas and the Peace process

The path toward peace has been painful for Arab and Israeli alike. The key problem has been terrorist attacks perpetrated mainly by the Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah.

Hamas was created in 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, an Egyptian born movement that rejects western “evils” and calls for a pan-Islamic religious state. The word “Hamas” means “zeal” in Arabic and is also the acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya – the Islamic Resistance Movement. Theologically they believe that Islam must rule in the Holy Land and that divine salvation awaits those who destroy Israel.63

The most disturbing element in this terrorism is fact that Hamas is recruiting and training teenage boys to strap explosives to themselves and become human bombs.64 Hamas terrorism is designed to disrupt the peace process begun between the PLO and Israel. The

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64 The Jerusalem Report, April 6, 1995, pg. 24
peace process continues to crawl along toward implementation in spite of numerous terrorist attacks.

By February 1995, 17 months after Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands on the White House lawn, 116 Israeli’s have been killed and 400 wounded in terrorist attacks. The major attacks include such examples as these:

December 5, 1993: A member of Islamic Jihad opens fire on a bus on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway – 1 killed.

Afulah, April 6, 1994: a 19-year-old Hamas member blows up a bus with a car bomb – Nine killed, more than 50 wounded.

April 7, 1994: Hamas member fires a submachine gun at Israeli soldiers hitch-hiking at a shelter on the Ashdod-Tel Aviv highway – 1 killed, 4 wounded.

Haderah, April 13, 1994: Hamas member with a bomb strapped to his body blows up a bus – 5 killed, more than 50 wounded.

Jerusalem, October 9, 1994: Two Hamas gunmen fire on a pedestrian mall – 2 killed, 13 wounded.

Netzarim, October 11, 1994: a bicyclist with explosives strapped to his body detonates an explosion at an Israeli army checkpoint – 3 killed, 11 wounded – Islamic Jihad claims responsibility.

October 14, 1994: Nachson Wachsman, a soldier in the Israel Defense Force is executed by agents of Hamas. He had been kidnapped by them a few days before. An examination of his body revealed that he had been tortured during his captivity.

Tel Aviv, October 19, 1994: Hamas suicide bomber, 27 year old Saleh Abdel Rahmin al-Souwi, boards a bus with more than 100 lb. of explosives – 23 killed, 42 wounded.

Netzarim, November 11, 1994: Islamic Jihad suicide bomber rides a bicycle up to an army checkpoint – 3 killed, 11 wounded.

Jerusalem, December 12, 1994: attempted bus bombing – no fatalities


Beit Lid, January 22, 1995: 2 bombs at transportation junction – 21 killed

Unfortunately, Arab fundamentalists are not the only ones perpetrating terrorist attacks. Fortunately, the Jewish attacks are few. The most famous is the Purim morning attack by Kiryat Arba doctor Baruch Goldstein.

On February 25, 1994, Goldstein, dressed in his reserve army uniform, entered the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron (the Cave of Machpelah) at 5:30 in the morning. He fired 111 bullets from his Galil assault rifle into Moslem worshippers before he was beaten to death. 29 died and scores were injured.

One year later an article in the Jerusalem Report reports that,

with the threat of brutal violence ever present, the army has tried to divide Hebron into Jewish and Arab zones. But the separation is a farce, and the hatred is pure and transparent.\(^67\)

Goldstein was a member of Kach, a militant, Orthodox group founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane.

Another such group is a splinter group from Kach, known as Kahane Chai. These groups were outlawed following the Hebron massacre.

A less militant group is the Orthodox settlement movement known as Gush Emunim (Community of Believers). While committed to Jewish settlement of the “occupied territories,” Gush Emunim decries actions as radical as Goldstein’s massacre.\(^68\) However, they are committed to the idea of annexation and that “under the covenant between God and Abraham ... the right of the Jewish people to Samaria and Judea was incontestable and nonnegotiable.”\(^69\)

**Lebanon and Hezbollah**

The cycle in Southern Lebanon continues – Israel vs. Islamic militants – strike, counterstrike, attack, counterattack. The fundamentalist group most responsible is
Hezbollah. Hezbollah consistently rockets Northern Galilee targets, especially the town of Kiryat Shemona.\textsuperscript{70}

**Russian Immigration**

Russian immigration has slowed to a fraction of its early 90’s heyday. According to an article in the November 17, 1994 issue of *The Jerusalem Report*, the current Russian trend is to create a prosperous, assimilated, and generally non-Zionist community. Although Jewish emigration continues to Israel and America, most Russian Jews plan on staying put. Economics is the key factor. Staying means living in a society in which anti-Semitic expressions do occur. Russia’s Jews seem willing to accept that.\textsuperscript{71}

**West Bank**

The Rabin government is planning a $276 million separation line between Israel and the West Bank. After last January’s suicide bombing at the Beit Lid junction Rabin declared that he wanted to curb the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists by putting up a “fence” to separate Israel proper from the West Bank. The new separation line is set to run along much the same route as the old 1967 “Green Line” – although without redividing Jerusalem. That plan has been prepared and is only awaiting the green light from Rabin for implementation. In the words of *The Jerusalem Report* correspondent Leslie Susser it “sounds suspiciously like a border.”\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} *US News and World Report*, June 13, 1994,

\textsuperscript{71} *The Jerusalem Report*, November 17, 1994, pg. 31ff

\textsuperscript{72} *The Jerusalem Report*, May 18, 1995, pg. 24ff