

1967 Six Day War—Day Two

In 1400 BC, when Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land, God promised to go before them and give them the land. God had promised Abraham 600 years before in Genesis 15:7, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess it...Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land (Egypt), where they will be enslaved four hundred years, then they shall return here(Canaan)." God again said to Abraham in Genesis 17:8, "I will give to you and your descendants all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession." This promise was unconditional, but to live peacefully in the land required obedience. Therefore the history of Israel was tragically many cycles of God's discipline, but there was never any doubt that God would eventually restore the Jews to the land. After the Babylonian captivity they were restored to the land about 538 BC, only to be crushed by Rome and dispersed in 70 AD. Once again, after the horrors of WW II, the Jews were restored to the land as provided by the United Nations charter in 1948. I cannot help but believe that this is part of God's sovereign plan to set the stage for the second coming of Christ. I am making no predictions about when that blessed event will occur, but the establishment of Israel certainly sets the stage for biblical prophecy concerning the end times and second coming to be fulfilled. Nothing points to God's establishing Israel as a permanent nation in the land that He gave them as much as the Six Day War.

Amos 9:11-15, "In that day (the end times), I will raise up the fallen house of David...and rebuild the city...also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and plant vineyards...and gardens...and I will plant the people in their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them." (See also Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-8).

The Miracle of Day One

Israel's preemptive air strike against Egypt on day one of the 1967 Six Day War yielded such miraculous results that most people would agree that Israel was either the luckiest nation on earth or that God had providentially had a hand in it. The world was shocked by the lopsided and incredibly quick victory of Israel over its Arab antagonists. In less than two hours Egypt's entire Air Force was virtually destroyed, and on the same day with the same planes Israel destroyed the Syrian and Jordanian Air Forces. Russia had installed the latest air defense systems for Egypt with SAM missiles, and the best early detection radar systems, yet Egypt had turned it off for fear of friendly fire on their own planes. The Egyptian commanders had ordered a no fire order because they anticipated their own planes taking off to attack Israel.

In fact the pilots were celebrating at breakfast their coming victory, and all their planes were “sitting ducks” out on the aprons of the runway.

Israel’s biggest concern came to be that they would run out of time, and Russia would demand a cease fire. If this happened, Israel would not get to achieve all their objectives, not the least of which was Jerusalem. It reminded me of the miraculous wars Israel fought in the Bible like Joshua 10:10, “the Lord confounded the Amorites before Israel...for the Lord fought for Israel. Joshua prayed to the Lord, O sun stand still in Gibeon.” In other words, give us more time to reach our objectives. God did just that, and Joshua had time to clean up the Amorites.

Egypt’s sad chaotic retreat back to the Suez Canal in 1967 also reminded me of Gideon’s battle in Judges 7 when Gideon’s tiny force chased the Midianites back to the Jordan River slaughtering them all the way. David did the same thing when he killed Goliath, and the Philistines ran back to their land with the army of Israel slaughtering them all the way. In 1967, an Israeli tank battalion commander was amazed to see what appeared to be a gigantic Egyptian army fleeing in front of his single battalion of tanks. At the end of that day the roads back to Egypt were packed with thousands of burned out wrecks of tanks and vehicles—as the United States Security Advisor told President Johnson, “It was a Turkey Shoot”.

Day Two—The Big Lie

Only half of Egypt’s ground forces were still operating on day two. Three entire Egyptian divisions were wiped out. With such disorder and chaos, and very little communication from front lines, Egypt’s efforts turned to propaganda. First they charged the USA and Britain of intervention for Israel, and then even accused Russia of supplying faulty weapons. They claimed American aircraft flying off carriers were flying sorties against Egypt. Mobs attacked American embassies in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Libya banned oil shipments to the USA, and Arab radio stations called America the new #1 enemy. President Nasser called King Hussein of Jordan along with Syria to conspire to spread this lie. The calls were intercepted and recorded by Israeli intelligence with Nasser saying, “We will make an announcement that American and British airplanes are taking part against us from aircraft carriers.” This was passed on to USA President Lyndon Johnson who promptly held a press conference and called it “THE BIG LIE”

The real question at the end of day two was when would Washington, the U.N., and Russia force a cease fire? All three were thoroughly disgusted by the disinformation coming from Egypt and Syria—especially “the big lie”. Amazingly, Russia would demand a cease fire on

June 7 which was day three. Russia demanded that the United Nations Security Council pass a cease fire resolution which it did, but was shocked when Egypt's Ambassador El Kony rejected it. The proud Arabs were not prepared to admit they had lost.

Day Three Focus on Jerusalem

The 55th Israeli Paratroop Brigade had been asking for permission to invade the Old City of Jerusalem, but had been denied. The Jews had been denied access to the Old City and the historic Temple Mount and Wailing Wall for 19 years. Now they were held up by politics. The Israeli government was worried about world opinion. The Vatican had sent messages urging them not to invade Jerusalem, and the danger of destroying "holy sites" had their attention. For 19 years the blame of not taking Jerusalem in 1948 had been passed on to David Ben Gurion, so now that the opportunity presented itself, they felt they had to act. The order was given by Dayan with the strict proviso not to harm the Dome of the Rock, al Aqsa Mosque, or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—any one of which would cause an international crisis. Colonel Gur and the Israeli Paratroopers seized the hotel on the top of the Mt. of Olives, descended through the Garden of Gethsemane, crossed the Kidron Valley, and approached the Old City through the Lion's Gate (also known as the Sheep's Gate), which is on the Northeast side. They fought snipers all the way there. The Lion's Gate was closed and blocked by a bus. They called up a Sherman tank to blast it from point blank range. On his radio Col. Gur sent a recorded message to all his commanders, "The ancient city of Jerusalem which for generations we have dreamed of—we will be the first to enter it. The Jewish nation is awaiting our victory, our historic hour. Good luck." Led by a halftrack, the paratroopers charged through the narrow gate under fire. They took a quick left and entered the Temple Mount through the northern entrance. Overwhelmed with emotion, Gur radioed "The Temple Mount is in our hands." It was 10:00 am. They moved quickly for the Western Wall, the only visible remnant of the ancient Temple. The Star of David was hoisted, and his soldiers could not restrain themselves. They began singing and dancing and crying. Most of the Jordanian soldiers ran off with a few snipers remaining. The rest of the morning was spent with photo opportunities. Moshe Dayan got there first among the dignitaries, and made a famous picture touching the Kotel (Hebrew for The Wall). Then Dayan made a speech at the Wall which appeared on the front page of all the Israeli papers. The Holy Grail which Israel had sought after for 2000 years was back in their hands. By the end of the third day, Nablus, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jericho along with most of the West Bank of the Jordan River was taken. On the eastern front, the Jordanian forces had abandoned their vehicles and had run for the east bank and safety.

Days 4-6, The Coups de Grace

On the eastern front on June 8, King Hussein was desperately begging world leaders for help because it was obvious that Israel could easily cross the river and take the whole country. Britain and America were too disgusted with the “big lie” to care. What Hussein did not know was that Israel had no ambitions to cross the Jordan River, they just wanted to establish Israel’s border on the Jordan. I find it interesting therefore that when God gave Abraham the land He gave him the land with an eastern boundary of the Jordan River. The war for the west bank of the Jordan River was over.

On the southern front, the turkey shoot continued all the way down to the Suez Canal, but by mid morning on June 8 the order came to stop destroying Egyptian vehicles and tanks, and begin capturing them. The troops were to be allowed to go home, but officers were taken prisoner to trade for Israeli pilots who may have been shot down. Israeli troops were to stop at the Canal.

Now Israel’s focus turned north to Syria. The Syrians had never invaded, but their artillery continued to shell Israeli positions. There was quite a debate in the Israeli cabinet on whether to attack Syria considering the possible Soviet intervention. The northern commander of Israeli forces was David Elazar. He was frustrated that this great opportunity to end Syria’s harassments from the Golan Heights might slip away. Finally on June 9 the order came to attack. Israeli intelligence had intercepted a message from Nasser to Syria to accept a cease fire or face elimination of the Syrian army. Sensing a complete capitulation, Dayan ordered an immediate attack on the Golan Heights. The Israeli Air force went to work. The Golan is the area north of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Jordan River. It is a series of hills and mountains overlooking the Hula Valley which the Jordan River runs through. The area goes all the way up to a peak on Mt. Hermon of about 9230’. The Syrians had shelled the Israelis from these heights since 1948. Most of the Golan was taken on June 9 along with Banias in the far north and the approaches to Mt. Hermon.

On Day 6, June 10, the Syrians abandoned all fortifications, started destroying ammo dumps, and burning documents. They were in full retreat. General Elazar begged Dayan and Rabin to turn him loose, “Give me two divisions and I can take Damascus”. The order came to stop and cease fire at 6:00 PM. The last conquest was the summit of Mt. Hermon. Colonel Noi flew by helicopter to the summit and planted Israel’s flag on the peak. It became Israel’s highest observation post looking down into Lebanon and Syria.

Post War

The casualty rates had been 25 to 1 in Israel’s favor. Military hardware was even worse.

Egypt lost 85% of their tanks, guns, and vehicles. Israel had conquered 42,000 sq. miles, and was 3.5 times bigger. Even more important, Israel had gained world respect. Before the war, most of the world doubted their continued existence, and in deference to the Arabs did not even recognize Israel. Now there was no doubt that Israel was here to stay. Israel had gained the solid respect of the USA, and their relationship improved dramatically. Tourists and donations flooded the country. They had a new oil supply from Sinai wells, and thousands of new immigrants from all over the world began to flow in to Israel. Yitzhak Rabin got to name the war. He chose the Six Day War after the image of the creation account. Israel really had been re-created.

The Arab reaction was total humiliation, hatred, and a desire for vengeance. The big issue at the United Nations was returning all the land that Israel had gained through conquest. Israel's big request was simply that she be recognized as a nation. The U.N. resolution was passed promising the return of all land for recognition of "the right of all states in the area to live in peace and security". All the Arab nations rejected this. Russia pushed Egypt and Syria hard to recognize Israel's right to exist in return for the conquered territory. Egypt's Nasser told the Soviets, "I cannot accept this". Through 7 additional Presidents, the USA has continued to push Resolution 242 concerning territory for peace. There can be no doubt that the Arabs want nothing less than Israel's eradication.

Biblical Perspective

There can be no doubt that the Old Testament prophets all expected a restoration of Israel in the "end times", and a prominent position for them in the Kingdom of God. In Revelation 7, it appears that thousands of Jewish evangelists will spread the Gospel all over the world just before Jesus comes back. In Revelation 11, it appears that the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and God will send two great prophets to speak for Him there for 1260 days before Christ comes back. Also, don't forget that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Messiah (Christ), will come to the Mount of Olives there in Jerusalem. When Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mt. of Olives in Acts 1:9-12, the angel told them He would return in the same way and place. In Zechariah 14:4-5, the Lord will come with all His holy ones to the Mt. of Olives. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 11:25-27 made it clear that God is not through with Israel, but has a sovereign purpose in its existence. The stage is set for all of these great events that we look forward to with eager anticipation. The eyes of the world continues to be on tiny Israel.

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