

The Temple Mount is in Our Hands

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On June 7, 1967 the inspiring words of Lt. Gen Mordechai Gur, “The Temple Mount is in our hands,” were uttered when Israel captured the Old City of Jerusalem as part of the Six-day War. On that same day, Rabbi Shlomo Goren blew a shofar at the Wailing Wall, signifying its first liberation since the Romans destroyed the

Temple in 70 A.D. Tragically though, Moshe Dayan, the Defense Minister of Israel, gave the Temple Mount back to the Muslim Trust and the Jordanians in the mistaken belief that the nations of the world would accept and respect Israel as a democratic nation after the war. We all know the nations still dispute Israel’s very existence.

Nonetheless, on June 7, 2017 Israelis will celebrate 50 years of the reunification of Jerusalem, even though they have not yet won the day to rebuild the altar and the temple on the Temple Mount. Great pressure is building within Israel for that day to come soon.

Before we speak to our current year and its implications, let me take you back in the history of Israel to understand the miracles that took place to bring about the capture of Jerusalem. I also want to share a bit of my personal history because my life—perhaps like yours—has paralleled the current history of Israel in some respects.

As many of you know, David Ben Gurion proclaimed the birth of the nation of Israel on May 14, 1948 following the UN decree to establish a Jewish homeland. The Arab world refused to honor the UN decision nor recognize Israel’s right to exist. The war of independence broke out immediately and Israel fought the Arab world to survive. Israel and the Arabs signed an armistice in July of 1949. The armistice came after Israel broke through to relieve the Jews under siege in Jerusalem. Ben Gurion refused to quit until Jerusalem was a part of the new state. That is the month and year I was born. I grew up hearing about World War II, the Holocaust, and the new State of Israel. I also heard about how the small Jewish nation was struggling to grow and defend itself.

In 1967, I graduated from high school. In that spring, I was aware that a war was coming to the Middle East. Throughout the spring of that year, I heard of Egypt and Syria marshalling their forces and their plans to destroy Israel. There was no discussion of Israel winning such a war; it was a discussion of how Israel would lose that war. The only real question was how many Jews would die.

In Israel, however, the survivors of the Holocaust and the leaders of that small nation had a different plan. Instead of waiting for the Arab world to get completely organized and go to war, Israel decided to attack first. Their strategy



was sound. They would destroy the Egyptian Air Force first and then fight their enemy with Israeli air superiority. If they could accomplish that, the leaders of Israel believed the war would be short (3-4 days). Israel could not fight a long war of attrition. It had to be quick and decisive. This meant that the nation of Jordan had to stay out of the war. The Americans and British counseling the Israelis believed that even with air superiority it would take 7-12 days and Jordan would need to stay out of the war. Keeping Jordan out of the war was essential to victory. If Jordan entered the war, the Jordanian artillery was already in position and range to shell both Jerusalem and Tel Aviv neighborhoods. To the dismay of Israel, Jordan signed a defense agreement with Egypt on May 30—just before the war.

The battle plan was already dire to begin with. Israel would have to fight on two fronts: Syria in the north in the Golan Heights and Egypt with the vast area of the Sinai Peninsula. Jordan would be a third front hitting them in the middle with no room to withdraw. Historically, nations that have fought wars on two fronts of their homeland have lost. No nation has won a war fighting on three fronts of their homeland. Furthermore, Israel's military forces were way behind in numbers (men, armor, and aircraft). If Jordan entered the war, Israel would have to re-deploy forces desperately needed against Syria and Egypt to defend Jewish homes. Jordan could split Israel in two and win the war against Israel in a matter of days.

Israel launched the air attack against Egypt first. Rather than flying directly across the Sinai, Israel sent two groups. The first flew out over the Mediterranean Sea and then suddenly turned south and hit Egypt. The second group flew south into the Red Sea and turned north to hit Egypt at the same time. Israel did this knowing the Jordanians had air search radar that was capable of viewing all of the Middle East. Whether Israel knew this or God planned it this way, something strange occurred in Egypt as the attack unfolded. Egypt's air defense systems were shut off by Egypt just before the attack. Apparently, Egypt was flying two Egyptian generals to the Sinai for a visit and didn't want any accidental shoot downs on their own planes. By the time the Egyptian air defense was back up, the attack was underway. The attack by Israel was even more successful than hoped. Egypt lost nearly a hundred pilots and virtually all of their combat aircraft. But Gamel Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian leader, told the Jordanian leader that his planes and air forces had survived. He declared that he was counter-attacking with his many aircraft on the Israeli air bases and that Jordan should immediately attack. The Egyptians were fooling Jordan. The aircraft flying to Israeli bases were the Israelis', not Egyptian attackers. Jordanian radar could not tell the difference. Jordan then proceeded to conduct artillery attacks on the cities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Jordan thought the Egyptians and Syrians would win quickly and jumped into the war to capture its own spoils.

Shockingly, it was at this point that Israel quickly decided to capture the old City of Jerusalem and drive Jordan out of the West Bank back to the Jordan River. Jerusalem and the Temple Mount was never a planned military objective from the beginning. The decision was thrust upon them by Egypt's deception of Jordan. Simply based on providence, it is clear now that God wanted Jerusalem and the West Bank to be taken by the Israelis.

Israel was successful against Syria in taking the Golan Heights and against Egypt by taking the entire Sinai Peninsula. Israeli forces also drove Jordanian troops back across the Jordan River, defeating Syria in the Golan Heights had not been an easy task, though. The Syrians had dug in with many machine gun nests and had reinforced positions, unbeknownst to Israel. A multitude of traps had been laid by the Syrians in case Israel should attack them.

Nonetheless, Israel had prepared as well. Years before Israel had recruited Eli Cohen as a Jewish spy and had placed him in Argentina in the guise of a Syrian businessperson. After many years, this man had become a close friend of many Syrian military officers including the general in charge of the Syrian defense. One day this general was touring the Golan Heights with his friend, showing him how Syria would defeat the Israelis with its many fortifications. The friend commented on how hot it was for the Syrian soldiers in their bunkers and suggested that they should plant some trees near them for shade, to offer comfort to the soldiers. He suggested they get eucalyptus trees from Australia because they grow fast and provide excellent shade. The general liked the idea and promptly planted the trees at every fortification and machine gun nest. Later, Eli Cohen was discovered to be a spy. He was executed in 1965, but by then the Israelis knew where every Syrian stronghold was on the Golan Heights because of his "shady" suggestion. That intelligence was crucial for Israel to defeat the Syrians in the Golan Heights. Despite knowing where the Syrian strongholds were, though, it was not enough. There was fierce combat in each location.

At that point, something strange suddenly happened in Damascus. As propaganda against Israel, the Syrians decided to issue a radio broadcast to the world accusing Israel of slaughtering the women and children in Damascus. This broadcast was also heard by the Syrian soldiers defending the Golan. They thought Israel forces had managed to circumvent their positions and were attacking their homes. Syrian soldiers began evacuating the Golan to fight Israel in Damascus. Israeli forces followed after them, taking the Golan.

In the Sinai, against Egypt, Israel first attacked the Gaza Strip. Egypt had to withdraw. At the straits of Tiran (Southern point of the Gulf of Aqaba) Israel attacked from the sea. These two quick victories led the Egyptian forces to retreat from the Sinai with Israel chasing them to the Suez Canal. They never really were in the fight with any offensive actions.

In the fight against Jordan, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan had restricted the Israelis from going into the old City of Jerusalem. He did not want any shells fired or damage done in that location. However, when he heard that the UN was about to call for a ceasefire, thus freezing everyone's location, he ordered his paratroopers to take the city without cabinet or Government approval. Two paratroop battalions attacked without armor or artillery. One attack was from the high ground of Mount Scopus, the other was from the lower valley (Kidron). The Israelis were able to overcome the Jordanian resistance in short order. The paratroopers who captured the Temple Mount entered the Lion's Gate (sometimes called Stephen's Gate) and traveled along the way of the Via Dolorosa to the Kotel. Another Israeli battalion was able to make its way to the Jordan River, cutting off a Jordanian Unit in the city of Jenin. At the same time, an Israeli aircraft was very fortunate to hit one particular Jordanian tank that had the Jordanian commander inside. He was wounded; his radio operator and intelligence officer were both killed. As he was being evacuated, the Jordanian forces began to withdraw with him relinquishing the entire West Bank region to Israel.

**FOR ISRAEL, THE HIGH POINT OF THE CAMPAIGN
WAS THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM AND THE WORDS,
"THE TEMPLE MOUNT IS IN OUR HANDS."**

Israel had entered the war with 264,000 troops, 300 combat aircraft, and 800 tanks. They lost nearly 1,000 killed, 4,500 wounded, 15 captured, 400 tanks, and 46 aircraft. Twenty Israeli citizens were also killed.

The combined Arab forces began the war with 547,000 troops, 957 combat aircraft, and 2,504 tanks.

Syria lost 2,500 killed and 591 captured. Egypt lost 25,000 men killed or missing in action and 4,338 captured. Jordan lost 6,000 men killed or missing in action and 533 captured. Hundreds of tanks and 452 aircraft were destroyed.

Many believed that God intervened on Israel's behalf, securing the victory and the capture of the Golan Heights, the Sinai, the West Bank of the Jordan, and Jerusalem. It would seem that the words of Zechariah were true in those days.

Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, "A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of Hosts, their God." In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem. The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah. In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. (Zechariah 12-5-9)

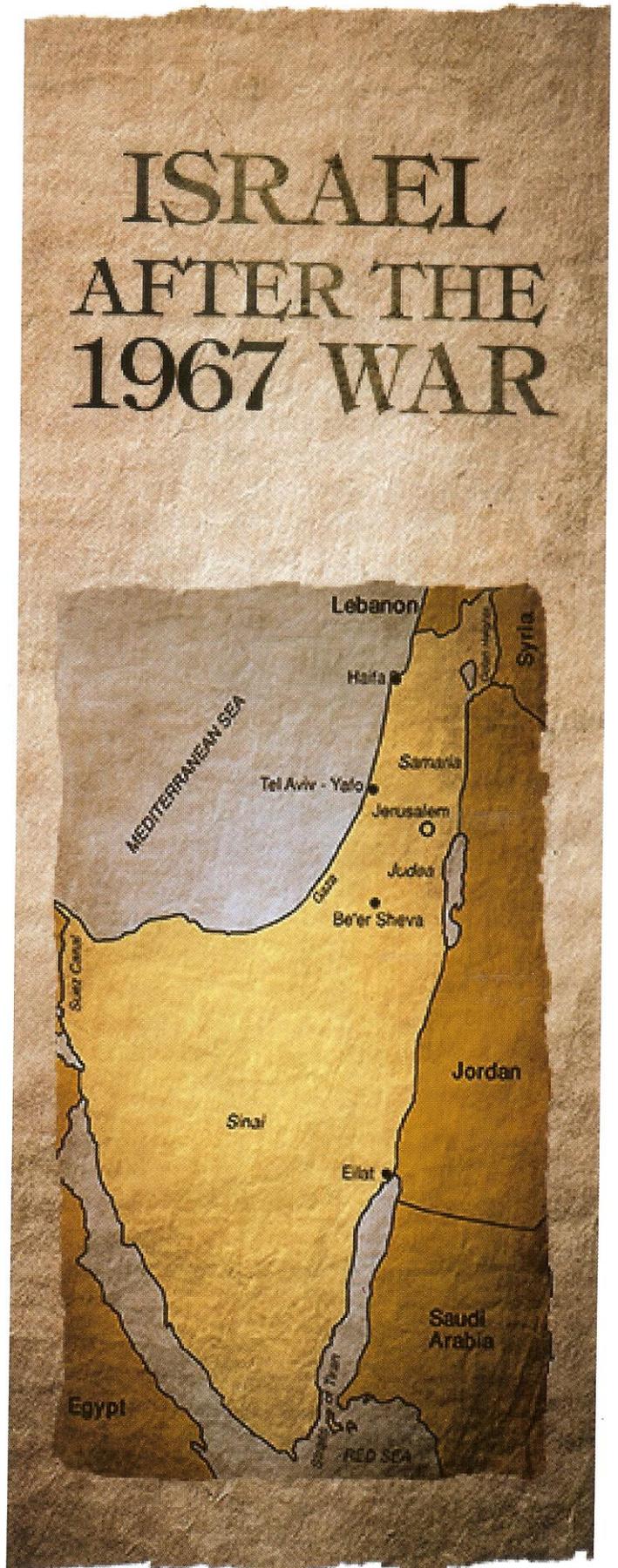
In July of 1967, one month after Jerusalem was liberated, I joined the US Navy. I was excited about Israel's miraculous victory. I knew I was Jewish, but I had nothing to do with their victory; yet, I was pleased to hear of their success and that just maybe the God of Israel had something to do with it. Little did I know how profound that victory was until much later in my spiritual life and the days in which we now live.

In October 1973, another war broke out with Israel and the same enemies again. This time the Arabs attacked on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). It became known as the Yom Kippur War. The Arab world wanted to capture Jerusalem again and destroy the Jewish state. That was their definition for complete victory. In fact, they were bragging as to who would get there first (Syria, Jordan, or Egypt). But the truth is that Syria was willing to only win back the Golan. Egypt was willing to only win back the Sinai. Jordan was being lied to and was being set up again.

When Syria attacked the Golan Heights, the spearheading units broke through the Israeli lines quickly and took control of the Mount Hermon area. Many of the Israelis were on leave for the holiday and virtually every unit was undermanned and simply not ready. Many hours went by before those men could reach their units. The Israeli reserves (the bulk of the IDF) took even longer to get going. But for some reason the Syrian commander leading the main Syrian spearhead force refused to cross the Jordan River north of the Galilee after penetrating the Golan Heights. He was convinced in his mind that Israel had set a trap for him and that he would be defeated. There was in reality no one on the other side of Jordan waiting for him. In the aftermath, there are some who say God and His angels stopped the Syrians. What we do know is that this commander was scared to death and would not cross the river into Israel.

When the Israeli reserves arrived, their counterattack was devastating. They recaptured Mount Hermon and advanced to within 25 miles of Damascus. The ceasefire was the only thing that saved the Syrians from being shelled. The Israelis were determined to take Damascus.

In the Sinai, the Egyptians literally blew through the Israel Bar Lev defensive line in a very short time. Israel had prepared numerous defensive bunkers and had built a huge berm on the Sinai side of the Suez Canal. In the first minutes of the war, Egypt fired more than 10,000 artillery rounds and used large hydraulic hoses to cut notches in the sand berm. Thousands of Egyptian troops and armored vehicles crossed the canal and established a beachhead into the Sinai. The Bar Lev line did little to impede the Egyptian progress. In the days that followed there were a series of major tank to tank battles. Israel tank forces were attacked and the suffered many loses due to sapper (small units that attack tanks) and anti-tank weapons as opposed to tanks themselves. Many felt



later that Israel's leadership was over-confident and not properly prepared to fight the war. Supporting that belief, the United States had to supply emergency ammunition and supplies as Israel had run out in a matter of days. Those supplies were stripped from US units in Europe to shorten the time frame to get Israel what they needed.

The Battle of the Chinese Farm was fought in Sinai over the course of a couple of days (October 15-17). More armor units were destroyed there than in any previous armor battle in the history of the world (including WWII). This is when General Ariel Sharon led an armored division to cross the Suez Canal using pontoon bridges to enter Egypt west of the Suez Canal. Fanning out to the North and the South, the Israelis destroyed many SAM sites that were protecting the two Egyptian armies in the Sinai. Without that protection, Israel's air forces could strike them with impunity and began doing so. At the height of these events, the Soviet Union declared that it would take action to defend Egypt by invading the Sinai to fight against Israel. The United States went from DEFCON 4 to DEFCON 3 and told the Soviets to stay out.

While this was happening, I was sitting on the USS Coral Sea CVA43 sailing across the Pacific Ocean toward home after serving a nine month WESTPAC war cruise to Vietnam. I will never forget the night we heard the announcement "*Quebec Working Parties. This is not a drill.*" This signal call is the announcement to load nuclear weapons on all aircraft on an aircraft carrier. It was more scary that General Quarters. We were then heading north toward the east coast of the Soviet Union. That night I prayed, "*Oh God, what is going on in the world?*"

Later that night the captain came on the loudspeaker to tell us that Israel was in a war in the Middle East. We were then part of the preparation to keep the Soviet Union out of it. The very next day, we received news broadcasts that were from various sources that were put on the ships TV System. We were looking for anything that would let us know what was happening. One particular broadcast was a French reporter interviewing General Ariel Sharon. They were standing at the rear of an Israeli tank and over their shoulders you could see the pontoon bridge where dozens of Israel armored vehicles were crossing into Egypt. The reporter kept asking Sharon what his plans were. He answered that he was invading Africa! Suddenly, the tank they were standing by fired up and an Israeli soldier jumped on the back behind the turret. Sharon stepped away and the reporter came closer to the camera trying to conclude his taping. As the camera panned back, you could see the soldier on the tank flip a "Benjamin Cloth" (a cloth used by Israeli to protect their face in the desert sand and wind) over his shoulder and raised a shofar to his mouth. You could hear the faint sound of the shofar and then suddenly about a dozen Israelis suddenly emerged from the sand all around the tank. At that point, the reporter could only mumble that he was with General Sharon's force heading for Cairo. It was purely a staged propaganda film for the international press. From that day on, I was completely impressed with the IDF and General Sharon. . . The Egyptian and Syrian begged for a ceasefire. In the end, Israel agreed to the ceasefire and allowed the two Egyptian armies to retreat back across the Suez Canal.

In the central part of Israel, the Jordanians did no better, losing men and equipment.

Jordan and Egypt later signed peace treaties with Israel. To this day, the Syrians are technically still at war—only a ceasefire exists.

The Scriptures say that Jerusalem is the "*Center of the World,*" All the Middle East peace negotiations in our generation have been focused on the ultimate goal of Jerusalem. The UN wants Jerusalem to be an international city, owned by no one. The Palestinians want it for their future Palestinian state as their capital, mainly to take it away from the Jews. In particular, the Palestinians want the Temple Mount; they refuse to permit Jews to pray or worship there as the previous Jordanian policy allowed. The Government of Israel, despite the whole world saying otherwise, continues to say since 1967 that the City of Jerusalem will remain with them "undivided."

But what is to happen with the Temple Mount? This issue still remains open for Israel which does not control it. In 1949, they built the road to make Jerusalem part of Israel. In 1967, they captured the entire city. In 1973, they defended the city. What is to happen in the future concerning this City and the Temple Mount?

The City of Jerusalem was founded by King David more than 3,000 years ago. He began by purchasing the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite and establishing an altar to God. This is where God placed His Name as promised by Moses. This is where the words of the Psalmist declare God's ownership of the earth and everyone in it.

*A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.
(Psalm 24:1)*

The conflict for Jerusalem is not just about the previous Arab/Israeli wars or the present day Middle East negotiations with the Palestinians and the United Nations. It is about the conflict between the God of Israel and the entire world. Whose decision will prevail? Who is mightier than the other? History has already given us the answer, but the present day world does not listen to history anymore. This world and its many nations do not consider the God of Israel to be a determining factor in the conflict. They just see the Jews, whom they despise without cause.

Someone once said that if you don't learn from history, you are doomed to repeat it. Such is the case for Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah has aptly described the present day with all of its history concerning Jerusalem.

The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him, "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. (Zechariah 12:1-3)

It has now been fifty years with Jerusalem in the hands of the people of Israel, but they still don't have actual control of the Temple Mount. The city is still contested by the nations of the world. The number 50 has a powerful spiritual theme. It means freedom and release. Is the Temple Mount or a part of it about to be released into the hands of Israel? If so, it will probably come with another war in the Middle East.

Will this be another war with Israel's survival at stake and the loss of many soldiers, tanks, and aircraft? Yes. But this war will also include aerial drones, stealth aircraft, cyber-attacks, and the latest weapons technology. And, there is a good possibility that the God of Israel will secure the victory in a very special way. Egypt won't be in this next war. The attack will come from the north, from a multitude of enemies. They will reach almost to Jerusalem and then they will die. That is the way Ezekiel describes the battle. The best part is that God will pour out His Spirit on the whole house of Israel. That is probably when Israel will get the Temple Mount and build a living altar to the Living God.

. . . setting the stage for the Great Tribulation.

All Scripture references from the NASB.
Celebrating 50 years of Freedom!
YAVOH—Hebrew for "He is coming."
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