# YOM YERUSHALAYIM: Who conquered Jerusalem in 1967?

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Today, 28th of Iyar, we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, the day Jerusalem returned to our hands. This year, 2017, marks the 50th anniversary of this glorious day.

Yesterday we explained how the Tora describes the Divine intervention when the people of Israel fights against its enemies. Today we will see that sometimes HaShem's intervention on behalf of His people, Israel, might be even more evident. We just need to open our eyes wide and remember what happened in the Six Days War, and particularly in the conquest of Jerusalem.

Let's start from the end. While the battle for Yerushalayim took a very heavy toll, the precious lives of hundreds of our heroic soldiers (776 Israeli soldiers died in the Six Days War), Yerushalayim was literally a gift from HaShem.

Why? Because Israel NEVER intended to conquer Jerusalem in the 1967 war.

The main enemy and instigator of the war to destroy the young Jewish State was Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt. All the forces of the Israeli army were to be focused on defending the desert of Sinai. If the Sinai peninsula fell, the Egyptian forces (that was their plan!) would reach Tel Aviv.

Defense Minister Moshe Dayan made this clear to Uzi Narkiss, the commander of the relatively small forces protecting Jewish Jerusalem: the priority is to defend Sinai.

Let us clarify that at that time Jerusalem was divided. The

Western part belonged to the Jews while the Eastern part, including the Old City and the Western Wall, etc. belonged to Jordan (Jews, obviously, were barred from access to the Wall or even to the Old City).

Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol sent a message to King Hussein of Jordan (the father of the current King of Jordan): Israel had no intention of fighting Jordan (let alone, eastern Jerusalem!) if Jordan does not intervene in the war. But everything indicated that Jordan would attack. They had 5,000 soldiers stationed in Jerusalem, with permanent reinforcements coming from Amman, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and an elite force of Iraqi soldiers.

The Jews of Jerusalem were ready for the worst. People donated blood, learned first aid and improvised shelters for children. It was estimated that there would be between 10,000 and 100,000 civilian casualties. National parks were prepared to be used as cemeteries. Wooden coffins were built for the first funerals …

And Jordan attacked. Moshe Dayan gave the explicit command to respond to the fire "proportionally," and under no circumstances to escalate violence, in the hope that Hussein would eventually stop his attack. But Nasser, the Egyptian president, after having suffered irremediable casualties to his Air Force, tried to convince Hussein to attack Israel and he said: "Our forces are already on their way to Tel Aviv. You have to join the attack!". Hussein believed Nasser's false story and began to attack Jewish Jerusalem.

Little by little, and miraculously, the Jewish forces won every battle they fought. They advanced, as the Jordanian soldiers fled in chaos, confusion and fear. The Jewish troops approached the Old City and for the first time realized that they could cross its walls. Levy Eshkol authorized the entry, but hurried to clarify: "We will advance [towards the old city] knowing that once the war is over, we must leave

Jerusalem.”

Incredibly, most of Israel’s ministers were opposed to advancing towards the Old City. “The world,” they said, “particularly the Vatican, will not allow Jews to be the custodian of the Christian holy places.” Israel’s political leaders were afraid of a possible success. The Jewish troops, however, began to encircle the old city.  At 3 am on June 7, Ali Ata, the Jordanian commander responsible for the defense of Jerusalem, entered the office of Jordanian governor of Jerusalem, Anwar al-Khatib, and said: “The battle for Jerusalem is lost “All but two of his officers had deserted, and the Jordanian troops were demoralized and exhausted and could not be controlled without their officers. Ali took his soldiers out of the old city and fled to Amman.

And so Jerusalem, 1899 years after being destroyed by the Romans, returned to be the capital of the Jewish People.

Yerushalayim was prepared for mourning. To bury and mourn thousands of dead. But the anguish was transformed into joy, and the nightmare into a beautiful and unattainable dream that to everyone’s surprise came true. It was like daydreaming,  an echo of the words of King David (Tehillim 30). “[HaShem] You turned what was to be my funeral, into a celebration; You opened my shroud and made me wear clothes of joy. ”

The coffins that had been prepared for the funerals were dismantled. And that year, the Yehudim of Yerushalayim used that wood to build their Sukkot, the huts that represent the eternal protection that HaShem grants to His beloved people, Israel.

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See the complete story of the battle for Jerusalem in this book: “The Battle for Jerusalem: An Unintended Conquest” by Abraham Rabinovich