Three Miracles of the Independence War

ON VICTORY AND DEFEAT

On the day that the Jewish leaders declared the establishment of the new State of Israel, on May 14, 1948 (5 Iyar 5718), the neighboring Arab countries declared war on the Jewish State and began an invasion on all fronts, confident of their victory. Israel had many disadvantages, but the most notable was the lack of weapons. Let us remember that the five Arab countries that launched an attack against Israel – Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan – had become independent a few years earlier. Both England and France equipped them with weapons and trained their armies. The Arab countries had, for example, 50 tanks, while Israel only had one tank. The Arabs had 200 artillery vehicles, and Israel had just two. The Arabs had 140 guns, and Israel only had five. The most significant disadvantage was that the Arabs had more than 70 warplanes. At the start of hostilities, Israel had none. The Arab countries had warned that if Israel declared its independence, they would attack. They were waiting for this to happen since the chances of winning the war and having everything in their favor were 100%. So confident were in their triumph that they called on the Arab radio for all Palestinians living in Israel to leave for a while the country, assuring them that they would return very soon when the short battle would be over, and all the Jews would be thrown into the sea (a euphemism for: "being brutally murdered"). Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians left the territory of Israel. In this way, the Arab countries created the "Palestinian refugee problem," for which they never took charge, and instead, to this day, they continue to blame Israel.

OBJECTIVE: TEL-AVIV

Immediately after the declaration of independence, Egyptian

warplanes appeared in the skies over Tel Aviv, began to bombard the city, and met no resistance. These nonstop attacks from the air left hundreds dead – including women and children – and thousands wounded. The Egyptians advanced significantly and reached Ashdod, remaining only 30 kilometers from Tel Aviv. The powerful Jordanian legion, trained by the British and commanded by British generals (sic.), managed to besiege Jerusalem, and the invasion of the Holy City was imminent. The Jordanians also captured the city of Lod and what is now Ben Gurion International Airport and approached Tel Aviv from the east. Iraqi forces that came from the northeast were also closing in on Petah Tikva and Hadera on their way to Tel Aviv. The Syrians were surrounding the city of Tiberia and, together with the Lebanese military forces, had isolated the Galil, the north of the country, from the rest of Israel. The final destination of the Arab armies was Tel-Aviv, which at that time was the seat of Israel's Government and the military High Command.

UNITED AGAINST ISRAEL

Israel had no way to defend herself and could not get weapons. Why? Because the United States was leading an international embargo that prohibited any country from selling weapons to Israel, with full awareness and knowledge that Israel could not possibly survive the attack of the Arab armies on her own. It was only a matter of time before a new Shoah was repeated, and the world, for the second time, acted as a silent accomplice. All efforts by Israel's newly created Israeli Army to defend itself failed. The forecasts that predicted the brutal defeat of Israel were coming true. The military superiority of the Arab armies was insurmountable. There was no way the Israelis could withstand the attacks even for a few more days…. the end was imminent. The Arabs, very confident in their victory, announced that "what Hitler had done was nothing in the second war, compared to what they would do with the Jews" once they conquered Tel Aviv. The world, as in a horrible *dejavú* of the Holocaust, watched and remained silent.

And then a great miracle happened.
It was June 11, Sivan 4, 1948.

THE CEASEFIRE

The Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, appointed by the United Nations as a mediator between Israelis and Arabs, proposed a ceasefire, that is, an interruption of the military activity of the armies for four weeks, offering that each one remains in control of the positions they had conquered up to that moment. Israel, which was losing on all fronts, obviously agreed. The inexplicable thing—the miraculous thing!—was that the Arab countries also accepted this ceasefire, even though they were one day away from conquering Tel Aviv! I quote Professor Ben Artzi, a historian at Bar Ilan University. He writes this in his (Hebrew) book Megillat Hatequma VehaAtzmaut: "But why did the Arabs accept the ceasefire…? In reality, all their military objectives had already been achieved: Jerusalem was surrounded and besieged; Tel Aviv, a very short distance [from falling into their power]; the south of Israel [the Negeb] disconnected from the rest of the country, and the Galil, the north, had already been conquered. A little more effort on the part of the Arabs, and they were already in the heart of Jerusalem, Petah Tikva, Netania, Hadera, Afula, and Tel-Aviv".
Ben Artzi does not try to hide his conviction that this ceasefire was a miracle of Biblical proportions.

CELEBRATING AHEAD OF TIME

The truce began on June 11. The five Arab armies, who considered that they had already won the war, started negotiations among themselves about how Israel's territory and the spoils of war were going to be divided once the Jews had formally surrendered, something they hoped to happen in the next few days. But Israel took advantage of the ceasefire and, with the support and generous donations of Jews in the United States and the diaspora, bought from Czechoslovakia, the only country that dared to break the international embargo, all the

weapons they could, including 15 military planes. It also changed its strategy: even though the military balance was still in favor of the Arabs—at least 10 to 1— Israel decided that now it was not only going to defend itself but would start attacking the Arabs! Once the war resumed, the Arab armies were so confident in their victory that they practically stopped fighting. According to Igal Alon, the famous Palmach commander, when the ceasefire expired: "The Arab armies that had a great advantage stopped advancing, something that is inexplicable."

BIBLICAL FEAR

And then the third miracle happened. Israel's courageous and unexpected decision to go on the offensive caught the Arabs entirely by surprise. They went from passivity to panic, imagining that Israel had more power than it did. At the end of May, four unassembled "Messerschmidt" military planes secretly arrived in Israel from Czechoslovakia inside a commercial aircraft. The planes were assembled in record time, and on May 30, before they could test them, they went out on their first mission: trying to stop the Egyptian forces who were only 30 kilometers from Tel Aviv. The planes made a surprise attack on the Egyptians. Still, they did not cause severe damage since the attacking equipment did not work well. However, the Egyptian commander in charge of that force sent an urgent message to his superiors, telling them that "his army could advance no further because they were being bombarded by a force far superior to them." All this panic was more imaginary than real.

The Tora first mentions the "fear" that Israel's enemies felt in the Yaaqob Abinu story. When the inhabitants of Canaan, obviously stronger and more numerous than Jacob and his sons, "wanted but did not dare" to attack Jacob. The Torah says (Genesis 35:5) that the inhabitants of those cities "were taken by a Divine fear, which dissuaded them from persecuting the children of Israel.

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This is the way HaShem intervened to save our ancestors from their numerous enemies. The Tora tells the same thing in the famous song that the children of Israel recited when crossing the sea. □□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□. In the book of Shemot, it appears to be an explicit promise from God to Israel. Our Torah says (Exodus 23: 27) that when Israel prepares to conquer the peoples of Canaan, God will intervene. How? "And I will strike fear and terror into your enemies, and confuse them…and cause all your enemies to turn their backs on you and flee."
We see this "Divine Modus Operandi" dozens of times in the Tanakh: Hashem defends His people, infusing an irrational psychological fear in the hearts of Israel's enemies.

BIBLICAL AUDACITY
Israel took an Egyptian officer who had participated in the War of Independence prisoner in the 1956 war. He was asked why the Egyptians accepted the ceasefire and did not continue to advance toward Tel Aviv in 1948 when the road was completely open to them. The officer said: "When we attacked the Israelis, we saw something that scared us: even after taking direct fire and heavy casualties, the Israeli soldiers kept advancing as if they were "crazy" (mej'nunin). And then we said to ourselves: "These crazy people cannot be beaten. It is better to [accept the ceasefire] and settle for what we have already achieved.HaShem did not just infuse fear in the enemy; He also inspired extraordinary courage in the hearts of His people.

MY INTERPRETATION
I want to end this incomplete history of the most crucial war in the history of the State of Israel with a final reflection. The most inconceivable fact of this story is that knowing about their incomparable military inferiority, the leaders of Israel have decided to declare the Independence of Medinat Israel, knowing that the Arab's attack would be imminent. This decision did not make any sense, neither from a military point

of view nor from a logical point of view. Looking at the numbers, one can only think that it was an act of madness.
However, there is another possibility. David Ben Gurion and the Israeli leaders of that time were not just acting on their own. A kind of Divine audacity moved them: God intervened in their minds and hearts in a way opposite to the way He intervenes when He spreads irrational fear into the hearts of our enemies. The Almighty inspired their souls with incredible irrational courage and bravery, which led them to act like Nachshon Ben Aminadab, going into the water until literally it covered their nose, knowing that HaShem would eventually intervene by opening the sea.
This was the first miracle of Yom HaAtzmaut. Perhaps the greatest of them all