Codes, Migs & Parties: The Miracles of the Six-Days-War (Part 3)

We already saw the importance of Mibtza Moked- the operation taking place on Monday, June 5, 25 of Iyar, 1967, which was the beginning of the Six-Day War. These attacks by the Israeli air force destroyed the Egyptian Air Force and were decisive in Israel's final victory.

We started exploring how to explain the fact that all the Israeli planes reached their targets and were not intercepted or shot down by the Egyptian defense system. "Providentially," the anti-aircraft defense systems were not operating between 7.00 am and 8.00am , because Egyptian planes carried very important military and political personnel (see here).

But this is not the only unusual event that happened that day.

MIG vs MIRAGE

Knowing that the possibility of war was imminent, every morning the Egyptian air force carried out reconnaissance flights over the Sinai Peninsula with MiG 21 aircraft. These planes of Soviet origin were sleek and modern. To say the least, they were far superior to Israel's old French Mirage planes. These inspection flights began at 4:30 AM, and continued until 8:30 AM, with new shifts every 60 minutes. The Egyptians had calculated that if Israel would ever choose to attack, it would be during the first hours of the morning, so they coordinated their flights for that eventuality. On Monday morning, the 26 of Iyar, 7:15 AM, the Israeli planes took off towards the Sinai Peninsula. At 7:30 AM, The MiG 21s should have been flying off the Egyptian air base en route to Sinai. The confrontation between the two air forces would have been inevitable. Israel expected its planes to eventually find the

MiGs –which is why Israel dispatched nearly 200 aircraft, leaving only twelve planes behind– predicting that many would be shot down by the powerful Egyptian air force.

A 15-MINUTE DELAY

At 7:30 AM, the Israeli planes were entering the Sinai, ready to face the MiGs and anti-aircraft artillery in the following 15 minutes. But that did not happen. The Israeli planes arrived undisturbed at 7:45am and were able to bombard the Egyptian runways, preventing their enemy planes from taking off, and they managed to destroy the MiG combat planes on the ground!

If the MiGs had taken off at 7:30 AM as usual, they would have discovered the Israeli fleet and alerted the anti-aircraft defense forces. And they surely would have destroyed dozens of Israeli Mirage planes in battle.

What happened? Why were the MiGs not in the air?

That very day, the 7:30 AM shift was delayed. They did not leave on time because the officer in charge was late. Muhammad Sidiqi Mahmud, the Chief of the Egyptian Air Force, organized a party for his pilots the previous night (Sunday, June 4th) to raise their morale. The party, which included much dancing, food, and drinks, extended late into the night, and this had delayed the officer and pilots by a few critical minutes.

JORDAN JOINS THE WAR

Despite Israel's request not to enter the war before June 5th, Jordan joined Egypt and put its army under the command of an Egyptian general, Riyad, to be more effective in the coordination between the two forces. The Jordanians had very advanced military equipment, provided by England, and at 7.30 am the Jordanian radars were filled with small dots that indicated the invasion of the Israeli planes crossing into the Sinai peninsula. Immediately they transmitted the emergency alert to the Egyptians. But something extraordinary happened:

the Egyptian officials were not able to decode the alert message that came repeatedly from Jordan; and they were so frustrated that they disconnected the communication with the Jordanian intelligence service for a few critical minutes.

What happened? Why could the Egyptians not decode the urgent Jordanian message?

MIRACLES IN CODE

This emergency message announcing the Israeli attack was transmitted with a secret code, which was changed frequently. The experienced radar operator in Aman, Jordan, who detected the Israeli aircraft, sent the emergency code: “anab” (in Arabic means “grapes”). But the previous night the secret code had been changed, and the Jordanian agent “made a mistake”, and used the code of the previous day, which could not be identified as authentic by the Egyptian officers. When the Egyptian agents realized the possibility of a human error, it was already too late: Israel had already destroyed the enemy airports and the Migs on the ground.

THE SECOND ATTACK

But the Egyptian air force still had other planes at the military air bases in Cairo ready for combat.

At 9.34am Israeli planes left again, now towards Cairo. This time the Egyptians were ready, so the surprise factor was already lost. It was also no longer possible to avoid Egyptian radars and their anti-area artillery fire. The Egyptians, who were on high alert, activated all their defenses against the Israeli planes, but all the Israeli planes hit their targets and miraculously, ONLY ONE Israeli AIRCRAFT was shot down! In this second attack the Israeli air force destroyed 107 Egyptian aircraft and rendered ALL Egyptian airports, military or civilian, useless so that Egypt could no longer use any of its aircraft to attack Israel or to defend its troops on the ground.

In 3 hours, from 7.45 am to 10.45 am**, Israel destroyed 391 aircraft of the enemy Egyptian forces (2/3 of the aircraft of the United Arab Forces) and disabled 26 military air bases and runaways, neutralizing all Egyptian military and civilian airports.**

That morning the war had been decided in favor of Israel: with no Egyptian planes Israel had now full hegemony in the air.

THE EXPLANATION OF KING DAVID
Some 3000 years ago, King David wrote in Sefer Tehillim- his book of Psalms- on Psalm 124, about HaShem's Divine Intervention when Israel is attacked by its many enemies:

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“If God had not been with us, if God had not been on our side, when men rose up against us … [our enemies] would have swallowed us alive, because of their hatred for us, [they would have passed] like a torrent of impetuous water over our heads, dragging us [towards certain death] …Blessed be HaShem, who has not delivered us like prey into their teeth … [thanks to His intervention] we have escaped alive, like a bird that escapes from the trap of the hunters …. the trap was destroyed and we survived. Our help comes from God, the Creator of heavens and earth.”

To be continued