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The 1973 Yom Kippur War

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Introduction

The Yom Kippur War is the most traumatic event in Israel's short, modern history. The Egyptian-Syrian attack that started in the midst of the Jewish people's holiest day of the year almost completely surprised the State of Israel. Within a few hours, the Arab armies broke the IDF defense lines along the Suez Canal and in the southern sector of the Golan Heights. On Sunday morning, October 7, the second day of the war, the IDF's southern command had hardly any forces left who were capable of blocking the Egyptian army from penetrating deeply into the Sinai. At the same time, the Syrian tanks that reached the area of *Maaleh Gamla* (Gamla rise), only a few miles from the Jordan River, faced no viable Israeli force and were poised to cross the river into the Jordan Valley. The only force the IDF could employ during these hours was its air force (IAF). Israel's two major air attacks against the massive Egyptian and Syrian air defense systems that controlled the airspace over the battle ground completely failed. Moshe Dayan, Israel's legendary general who was then serving as Defense Minister, spoke of the desperate situation in terms of a war for the fate of the "Third Temple." The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC and the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. Dayan's selection of words implied that Israel's very existence was now at stake.

Toward evening that Sunday, the IDF had managed to assemble sufficient reserve forces to ensure the prevention of further Arab advancement. The situation stabilized. On the morning of October 8, the IDF took the military initiative, which it proceeded to hold despite temporary setbacks throughout the rest of the war, which concluded some two weeks later. At the war's end, the IDF stood 101 kilometers from Cairo and within artillery range of Damascus. Despite these impressive achievements, the shock of the unexpected war, the dire situation during its initial stage and the heavy casualties that Israel suffered in defending itself turned the military victory into the most harrowing event in the country's history.

Arab Preparations for War

Since the end of the 1967 War, Egypt's prime strategic goal had been the return of the Sinai Peninsula, captured by Israel in the war. The end of the War of Attrition in early August 1970, however, left the Egyptians with hardly any military option. Although the Egyptian army had caused Israel considerable losses in the course of the 17 months of that static war, the IDF once again proved its military superiority, particularly in its air capabilities. A diplomatic alternative was also futile. Golda Meir's refusal to enter into negotiations with Egypt over the return of the Sinai thwarted efforts by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat – who had taken up the reins of power when President Nasser died in September 1970 – to use a

diplomatic avenue. Caught between a rock and a hard place, Sadat opted for a combination: A limited war aimed at gearing up a diplomatic process.

In October 1972, Sadat ordered his army to prepare for a war to occupy a small part of the Sinai desert, up to about 10 kilometers east of the Suez Canal – the territory that was covered by Egyptian anti-aircraft deployment on the western side of the canal. According to Sadat's logic, the initiation of war would demonstrate Egypt's resolve to reject the status quo and would compel the superpowers to pressure Israel to start negotiations on the return of the Sinai (Shazly, 27-30).

The Egyptians started practicing for this specific war plan in late 1972. President Sadat duly informed his Syrian colleague, President Hafez Assad, of his decision, and the two states began coordinating parallel military preparations. The Syrian war plan called for the occupation of the entire Golan Heights within 24 hours without crossing the so-called 1949 "green line."

Although the top officers of the two armies met secretly to finalize operational plans, Sadat did not reveal to Syria his plan for a very limited territorial goal in the Sinai, as it was obvious that Assad would refuse to join a war in which the main burden of fighting the IDF would rest with his own army. Thus, the plan that was discussed with the Syrians called for the occupation of the entirety of the Sinai. The Syrians learned of Egypt's real intentions only during the war itself (Seale, 197).

The Israeli Surprise

In the Israeli collective memory, the Yom Kippur War is associated mainly with the IDF's lack of preparedness. Known by the Hebrew term *Mechdal* (dereliction of duty), this condition was primarily due to the failure of Military Intelligence (AMAN) to provide a high-quality warning that an attack was imminent. According to IDF doctrine in 1973, such a warning was to be given at least 48 hours before the beginning of a war – the minimal time span needed to mobilize the reservists, who then constituted approximately 80% of the IDF ground forces. In 1973, however, the warning was provided only ten hours before fighting commenced. As a result, the IDF lacked the forces needed to defend the Suez and Golan fronts and the military command was highly disorganized during the war's first stage.

AMAN's failure to provide the time-sensitive warning was not the result of insufficient information regarding the Arabs' preparations or intention to launch a war. Israel's Military Intelligence had, in fact, received substantive information about an imminent attack from key sources including King Hussein of Jordan, who had warned Prime Minister Golda Meir ten days before the war began, as well as well-placed Mossad agents in Egypt. In addition, AMAN had been closely following the accumulation of forces along the Golan and Suez Canal. Thus, there were ample warnings and indicators. Until the very last moment, however, AMAN's senior analysts, as well as its director, Eli Zeira, continued to adhere to their belief that Egypt would avoid war so long as it did not receive aircraft capable of attacking IAF bases in Israel and surface-to-surface missiles that could deter the IAF from attacking Egypt's rear. These conditions, were not met prior to the war and consequently, AMAN officially estimated even twenty-four hours before the fighting started that the likelihood of war was "low" (Bar-Joseph 2005, 81-186). The CIA, which relied mostly on Israeli estimates regarding the likelihood of war, erred similarly.

Only a last-minute warning by Israel's most important intelligence source in Egypt, Ashraf Marwan, the late President Nasser's son-in-law and a close advisor to President Sadat, prevented a complete surprise. Marwan met the chief of the Mossad, Zvi Zamir, in London sixteen hours before the onset of the war to warn him that the Arab attack would begin the

next day. The warning reached Israel at 4:00 a.m., ten hours before firing commenced. The mobilization of the reserves began some five hours later, in the midst of the Yom Kippur fast and the first reserve soldiers were just arriving at their bases when the war broke out (Ibid.187-99).

The First Stage: October 6-7

The Arab attack opened with a massive artillery bombardment, accompanied by air attacks against IDF installations in the Sinai and the Golan. The ground offensive, on both fronts, came about an hour later.

The IDF order of battle on the Suez front was comprised mainly of regular army units; first and foremost the 300 tanks of the Sinai Division (Division 252). Other forces included 50 artillery pieces and a few hundred infantry soldiers who manned the Bar-Lev defense line along the Suez Canal (Oren 2004, 21). According to the Sinai defense plan, two reserve armored divisions, which amounted to approximately 600 tanks, were to reinforce Division 252 in case of war. According to this plan, the main burden of blocking an Egyptian attack rested with the regular forces, which were to be deployed in prepared positions along the canal. From these positions they could effectively fire at crossing sites and the expected Egyptian bridgeheads. Without sufficient forewarning, however, none of the reserve units was available when the war broke out.

Even more catastrophic, a series of organizational mistakes led to only three of the 300 available tanks being in position when firing commenced. The rest were as far as one hundred kilometers from the front line, moving hurriedly into battle. As a result, the Egyptian forces met no resistance at the most critical stage of the offensive – the crossing of the Canal. Within a few hours, thousands of Egyptian soldiers and hundreds of tanks had entered into the Sinai and had encircled most of the forts of the Bar-Lev Line. The Egyptian forces advanced a few kilometers farther into the desert and then, in accordance with their original plan, stopped and waited under the protection of their air-defense system, for the IDF counter-attack (Bartov 2002, 392; Oren 2004; Agranat, 214).

During the night, the three brigades of Division 252 attempted to join the besieged Bar-Lev Line forts. Many of their tanks were hit by anti-tank weapons, of which the Egyptian infantry made extensive use. With only a few exceptions, the Israeli tanks could not assist the forts. By the morning hours of October 7, the extent of the catastrophe on the Suez front had become evident: Most of the forts of the Bar Lev Line had fallen and the rest were encircled and many of the soldiers who had manned the forts had either been killed or taken prisoner. In the night fighting, the Sinai Division lost about two thirds of its 300 tanks and was left with 103 tanks to hold off the Egyptian advance until the reserve army arrived (Bartov 2002, 412). The remainder of the division faced a formidable Egyptian force: By Sunday morning, 90,000 soldiers, 850 tanks and thousands of other fighting vehicles were already deployed in territory that less than 18 hours earlier had been held by the IDF (Shazly, 232-33).

Although Egypt's secret war plan was known to Israel since Marwan's meeting with the Mossad chief in London, the chaotic atmosphere and the shock of the sudden attack led military intelligence to ignore it and to estimate Egypt's goals using an earlier version of the Egyptian war plan (Bar-Joseph, 2005, 281). This version called for the crossing of the Canal, to be followed by a large-scale armored attack into the Gidi and Mitla passes into the heart of the Sinai (Shazly, 1980, 21-22). By Sunday morning, however, it was clear that the IDF could not block such an offensive. Consequently, plans were drawn up to withdraw deep into the Sinai and to reestablish a new defensive line that, it was hoped, would enable the scarce forces of the Sinai Division to hold their position until the arrival of the reserve divisions.

Fortunately, the Chief of Staff, David ("Dado") Elazar, decided to delay the withdrawal until the last possible minute. The Egyptian generals, who were themselves surprised by the magnitude of their success, preferred to hold to their less ambitious planning. Consequently, the Egyptian army avoided advancing more than 10 kilometers east of the Canal. This line remained static until the IDF took its own initiative eight days later.

The situation in the north during the first day of fighting was even worse. Prior to the war, the Golan front had been reinforced by Brigade 7. Together with Brigade 188, the forces there amounted to 177 tanks. Additional forces included two infantry battalions and 11 artillery batteries. These troops faced a Syrian force comprised of more than 600 tanks and 80 artillery batteries.

The Israeli forces held very well at first. In contrast to earlier expectations, however, the Syrian offensive continued after dark and the pressure on the small Israeli defenses increased. Toward midnight, Brigade 188, which was defending the southern part of the front, was left with hardly any tanks and four Syrian brigades penetrated the Israeli defense line in the Rapid Junction area, about 10 miles south of the city of Kuneitra. One contingent continued advancing westward and reached the Gamla rise, an area overlooking the Sea of Galilee. A second brigade advanced northwards toward Kfar Nafah, the IDF's central command post on the Golan.

In the early morning hours of the second day of the war, the southern sector of the Golan Heights was broken, and the fifteen tanks remaining with Brigade 188 could not halt the Syrian advance (Bartov, 2002 408; Oren, 2004, 81). It was at this stage that the first reserve troops started climbing up the Golan to engage the enemy contingents. This caused a stop to Syria's westward advancement. The Syrians reached Kfar Nafah in the late morning – at approximately the same time that the first IDF reserves arrived there. In the ensuing tank battle, which lasted more than three hours, the Israeli tank teams drove back the Syrians. By Sunday evening, the IDF had accumulated sufficient forces to prevent any additional Syrian achievements on the Golan and the Israeli command began preparing a counter-offensive, scheduled to start on Monday, October 8.

The dire situation on both the Suez and Golan fronts had become even more serious during the first stage of the war as a result of the IAF's failure to destroy the anti-aircraft systems on both fronts – a necessary condition if aerial support was to be provided for the ground forces. Prior to the war, the IAF had prepared two large-scale operations that were aimed at achieving this objective. At sunset on Sunday, it commenced operation "Tagar" (challenge), whose objective was the destruction of the massive Egyptian anti-aircraft deployment, consisting of close to 140 Soviet-made surface-to-air missile batteries, supported by anti-aircraft guns. The operation was meant to be executed in four attack waves, but when the first wave was underway, an order was issued to stop and to prepare for the immediate implementation of operation "Doogman" (model), which was intended to knock out the Syrian anti-aircraft barrier.

The new order of battle came from Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, who concluded that, in light of the Syrian breakthrough in the southern sector, the IAF constituted the only available means to block the Syrians from crossing the Jordan River into Israel. Consequently, operation "Tagar" was called off and hasty preparations were begun for "Doogman." The operation was carried out at noon and proved to be a complete failure. Of thirty-one Surface to Air Missile batteries that were attacked, only one was destroyed—at the cost of six Israeli F-4 Phantom planes (Gordon, 2008, 321-36).

The decision to stop operation "Tagar" and to launch "Doogman" without the minimal necessary preparations was, in hindsight, a serious mistake. The high cost and the poor

results of operation "Doogman" led the airforce to give up any additional attempts to destroy air-defense deployments on either front. Consequently, the IAF lost much of its freedom of maneuverability and could hardly support the ground forces in their bitter fighting on the two fronts.

About 600 Israeli soldiers were killed during the first 30 hours of the war, hundreds more were wounded and more than 200 were taken prisoner. In addition, the IDF lost about 300 tanks and 34 aircraft (Bar-Joseph, 2004, 225-28). These were the heaviest casualties Israel had ever suffered in such a short period of time and they were first and foremost the outcome of the intelligence fiasco. By the end of the second day of the war, however, the reserve army was already deploying on both fronts and the IDF was recovering from its initial shock.

The Second Stage: October 8-14

Israel took the military initiative on the third day of the war. In the Golan, the IDF had accumulated two divisions and elements of a third. These forces were used to launch an offensive for which the initial goal was the recapturing of the southern sector of the Golan. The IDF's next goal was to advance toward Damascus as a means of compelling Syria to request a ceasefire. To increase pressure toward this end, on October 9, the IAF carried out a raid on Syrian Army headquarters in the heart of Damascus and later bombed additional Syrian strategic installations .

The ground offensive on the southern sector of the Golan proved successful. Within two days, the IDF had recaptured all the territory it had lost in the war with the exception of Mount Hermon, the highest peak on the Golan, which had served as Israel's main platform for intelligence gathering in the north. On October 9, the Syrian army carried out a major attack against the front's northern sector in the valley between Mount Hermonit and Kuneitra. The Syrians attack was repelled by the tank teams of Brigade 7 and 188, who fought heroically and lost 76 of their friends. The dramatic clash had become known as the battle of the "vale of tears" (Kahalani 1992).

The fierce fighting in the Golan took a very heavy toll on the Syrian army, which abandoned in the territory that Israel captured 867 tanks of its original 1,400 (Kober, 1995, 341). Consequently, the Syrian army's ability to defend Damascus was seriously weakened.

The fighting had taken a heavy toll of the IDF, as well, and when it initiated its offensive toward Damascus on October 11 the Israeli forces were greatly fatigued. Nevertheless, the IDF reached a position some forty kilometers from the city on October 12 and Israeli artillery began shelling its outskirts, as well as Syria's international airport. At this stage, however, fresh expeditionary Arab forces – an Iraqi armored division, two Jordanian brigades, and a Moroccan armored battalion – joined in the fighting for Syria. The exhausted Israeli forces ceased their advance after having captured an enclave of 400-square kilometers on the northeastern side of the Golan. By October 14, the front stabilized. With the exception of the battle for the Hermon toward the end of the war, ground fighting on the northern front became completely static.

Unlike the successful IDF counterattack in the north, the attempt to roll back the Egyptian forces from their territorial gains on the eastern side of the Suez Canal was a complete failure. A series of tactical mistakes and a poor level of control by the commander of the Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Shmuel Gonen resulted in the collapse of an offensive against the Egyptians at the central sector of the Canal front on October 8. The next day, a second and, unauthorized attempt by General Sharon failed as well. The IDF lost almost 100 tanks in the span of those two days. Consequently, the Chief of Staff ordered his commanders to avoid any new offensives on the Egyptian front until further notice.

The IDF's inability to break the deadlock on the Egyptian front led Golda Meir and her advisors to start considering a ceasefire. Their main concern was that the balance of forces could tilt now to the Arab side. This was the product of a number of factors: The continued erosion of the IAF, which was losing more and more planes and not replacing them, the IDF's inability to continue advancing towards Damascus and win a decisive victory on the Syrian front, the lingering American refusal to significantly replace Israel's military losses and the fact that a Soviet air and sea arms lift had already started to arrive in Syria and Egypt, along with Arab expeditionary forces.

Although accepting a ceasefire just then would have meant Israel's admission that the IDF had lost the war with Egypt, the Israeli cabinet convened on October 12 to discuss this option. The Chief of Staff argued that without a radical change on the Suez Canal front, any attempt to break through the Egyptian defense line was likely to fail at a high cost . The cabinet tended to accept the ramifications of this dire situation.

As luck would have it, new information arrived from a well-placed Mossad agent to the effect that the Egyptian army had started making preparations for a renewed offensive into the Sinai. The message was immediately delivered to the head of the Mossad, who reported it in the middle of the cabinet meeting. Under these new circumstances, the Chief of Staff suggested postponing the discussion, since a likely repulse of the Egyptian offensive could pave the way for a new Israeli initiative. The cabinet agreed (Bar-Joseph 2008, 76-7).

The Egyptian offensive took place on October 14 and was an utter failure. Nearly 250 Egyptian tanks were destroyed, in addition to hundreds of other military vehicles. Israeli losses amounted to approximately 25 tanks. Lt. Gen. (Res.) Haim Bar-Lev, the former Chief of Staff who on October 9 had replaced General Gonen as the commander of the Southern Command, pithily summed up the outcome of the battle when he reported to Golda Meir: "The Egyptians have returned to themselves and we have returned to ourselves."

The failure of the Egyptian offensive was the turning point in the war on the southern front. A day later, the IDF launched operation "Stout-Hearted Men" that would cross the Suez Canal and encircle the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd Armies on the eastern side of the Canal.

October 14 constituted a turning point on another dimension, as well. It was on that day that the first American cargo planes arrived in Israel following President Nixon's order to launch massive air and sealifts to replace IDF losses in the war. Israel had requested this assistance from the third day of the war. Indeed, Soviet air and sea shipments to Egypt and Syria had started on October 9. The controversy over the causes of the American delay in initiating operation "Nickel Grass" and who in the Nixon Administration – Secretary of State Henry Kissinger or Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger – had been responsible for the delay remains unsettled to this day. A consensus, however, does exist on the dimensions of the operation: Between October 14 and November 14, 567 flights of C5A (Galaxy) and C141 (Starlifter) cargo planes brought to Israel 22,325 tons of military hardware, including tanks, Armed Personal Carriers, artillery pieces, anti-tank guided missiles (ATGD), and electronic equipment. In addition, 36 Phantom F-4s were flown directly to the Lod airport and entered combat immediately.

The impact of the resupply operation on Israel's fighting capability is not fully clear. The popular belief of Americans is that this airlift saved Israel (Boyne, 2002). Israeli experts, on the other hand, claim that although operation "Nickel Grass" constituted a major moral boost, it had little significant impact on the IDF's fighting capabilities during the war. In any event, it is certain that the American operation lessened Israel's concerns about Soviet reinforcements to the Arabs and allowed the IDF to use, with less restraint, all of its resources. This act by itself gave a major impetus to the military initiative on the Egyptian

front because.

Following the launching of the American airlift, the members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) declared an embargo on oil shipments to the United States and any European countries that supported Israel. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) followed suit, also cutting production and raising the price of oil, leading to the oil crisis in western countries that lasted until the early 1980s.

The Last Stage: October 15-24

During the evening hours of October 15, the IDF launched operation "Stout-Hearted Men" – the crossing of the Suez Canal. Under night cover, a paratrooper brigade from General Sharon's reserve Division 143 crossed the frontlines at a juncture between the second and third Egyptian armies, crossed the Canal in rubber boats and set up a small bridgehead on its western side. Simultaneously, other forces from Division 143 and reserve Division 162 conducted a series of battles in an effort to widen the corridor through which additional forces could be moved to the Canal. The heaviest fighting took place in the area of the so-called "Chinese Farm" near the Big Bitter Lake, where more than 150 IDF soldiers were killed in the course of two consecutive nights – October 15 and 16. The widening of the corridor succeeded, however, and it enabled the laying of a first bridge over the Canal.

Following this success, Division 162 under General Adan, the regular Sinai Division under Gen. Kalman Magen and elements of General Sharon's Division 143, , crossedthe Canal. Because most of the Egyptian army was deployed in the Sinai at this stage, the Israeli forces met relatively weak resistance. Consequently, within a few days the Israeli forces overtook vast territories west of the Canal and destroyed large segments of Egypt's anti-aircraft layout, thus paving the road for more effective IAF participation in support of the ground warfare. On October 22, these divisions came close to completely encircling the third Egyptian Army on the front's southern flank.

At this stage, the USSR urged the Egyptians, who were shocked by the Israeli breakthrough, to accept a ceasefire. On October 22, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 338 calling for an immediate ceasefire and the commencement of talks on the implementation of Resolution 242 which had been passed in 1967 to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute. The IDF violated the ceasefire and advanced to the port of Adabiya on the Bay of Suez, thus completely encircling the Third Army that constituted about half of Egypt's ground forces and held the southern sector of Canal front.

Israel's violation of the UN ceasefire resolution led to a superpower crisis. Fearing that its Egyptian client was on the verge of another major defeat, the Kremlin started making preparations for direct intervention in the conflict, warning Washington that the USSR would take unilateral steps to stop Israel's aggression if it did not adhere to the ceasefire. In response, the United States raised its state of nuclear alert – a move that indicated to the Soviets that Washington would refuse to accept any such unilateral move. At the same time, however, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger increased the pressure on Israel to adhere to the ceasefire and avoid the complete destruction of the Egyptian Third Army. The combination of a new ceasefire resolution (339), the superpower crisis and the fact that Israel had achieved a major military victory led to a more stable ceasefire on October 24 and to the end of the Yom Kippur War.

From Ceasefire to the "Separation of Forces" Agreements

Sporadic clashes in the southern front continued until the Egyptian-Israeli "separation of forces" agreement (known also as "the first disengagement agreement") was signed on

January 18, 1974. Earlier, upon the beginning of direct military talks, which took place on the Suez-Cairo road, Egypt and Israel exchanged prisoners of war and Israel allowed the delivery of non-military supplies to the besieged Third Army. This earlier agreement, which was achieved through Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy," prevented the destruction of the Third Army and an Egyptian defeat in the war. As such, it helped to create equilibrium between Egypt's war achievements – primarily the initial occupation of a territory east of the Canal and the Israeli ones – the occupation of territory west of the Canal and the encirclement of half of the Egyptian army.

Following the signing of the separation of forces agreement, the IDF pulled back from the territory it had occupied west of the Canal and returned to a line some 25 kilometers east. The Egyptian army, in turn, moved most of its units westward and a buffer zone controlled by the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was established to separate the two armies. The small exchanges of fire that occurred prior to the signing of this agreement were the last military clashes between the two states.

At the same time that Israel was negotiating an agreement with Egypt, it was also holding talks with Syria. These, however, took longer and proved to be more difficult, primarily because of the tough stand taken by Damascus (which refused direct talks) and Israel's narrow leeway for territorial maneuverability because of the Golan's small size. Henry Kissinger served as the intermediary for the two sides and the talks were accompanied by a war of attrition initiated by Syria as a means of pressuring Israel to accept its demands. The Syrian-Israeli Agreement on Disengagement was finally signed on May 31, 1974. The IDF withdrew from the Syrian territory it had occupied in the war, as well as from 60 square kilometers on the Golan, including the city of Kuneitra. A buffer zone, under the UN Disengagement Observation Force (UNDOF), was established, and the two sides accepted limitations on arms near the border.

Following the signing of the agreement, Israel and Syria exchanged prisoners of war, and the 68 IDF soldiers and officers who had been held in Syria for more than half a year returned home.

As a part of the diplomatic package, Damascus made a verbal commitment to Secretary Kissinger to prevent terrorist activity on the Golan and to avoid using Syrian territory to attack Israel. Although the Israelis were highly skeptical of this commitment, the Syrians have kept their word. Since 1974, the Syrian-Israeli border has been Israel's quietest.

Summary

Although the IDF proved its ability to turn a near defeat into victory on both its northern and southern fronts, the Yom Kippur War is remembered in Israel as the nation's most difficult test since the War of Independence. In part, this feeling is due to the war's high cost. Between October 6, 1973 and May 31, 1974, 2,656 Israel soldiers were killed, 7,251 were wounded, and 314 were taken prisoner (including four in Lebanon). The IAF lost 102 planes and the Armored Corps about 800 tanks.

On October 5, 1973, Israel had perceived itself as being secure, believing itself to be the strongest regional power. This was reflected in the Labor Party's slogan for the upcoming elections: "Our situation has never been better." The opposition agreed, and Ariel Sharon, the rising star of the right-wing Likud Party, even declared: "Within the present borders, we actually have no security problems" (Benziman 1994, 135). The dramatic shift of attitude within less than 24 hours added another dimension to the nation's trauma.

The trauma led to a major political change. Although the Labor Party won the elections that

were held on December 31, 1973, Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan were forced to resign and were replaced by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres. The full impact of the trauma was felt three and a half years later when, for the first time in the state's history, Labor lost the elections and the perennial oppositionists - the Likud under Menachem Begin - came to power.

The high cost of the war and the intensive rebuilding of the IDF in its aftermath also led Israel into an economic crisis, which lasted well into the 1980s – a period that is known among historians of Israel's economy as the "lost decade" (Barkai and Liviatan, 2007, 140).

Most importantly, the war proved to most Israelis that the possession of occupied territories did not necessarily mean a more secure Israel. This conclusion led such leaders as Menachem Begin, Moshe Dayan and the pre-war hawk, Ezer Weizman, to do what Golda Meir had refused to do prior to the war – to give back territories in return for peace. Their readiness to return the entire Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian hands following Sadat's historic visit to Israel in October 1977 paved the way to a peace treaty with Egypt. This peace was undoubtedly motivated to a large extent by the events of October 1973.

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