

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our 2017 *Against the Odds Annual!*

It's not uncommon for historians to wax religious when discussing the Arab-Israeli Wars. In the Associated Press book on the Six-Day War, *Lightning Out of Israel*, several pages are devoted to Biblical, Talmudic, and Islamic notions of the history of the land of the Canaanites and lesser tribes, a land promised to Abraham in all three versions. Abraham, who travelled from Ur of the Chaldees, battled, lied, and bargained his way from what is now Iraq into "The Promised Land."

God, it was said, was impressed by him, considered him a friend, and promised him a land where Abraham's descendants would become as numerous as dust particles, a good land, flowing with milk and honey. The only problem was that Abraham's wife was unable to conceive, so she offered her Egyptian handmaiden Hagar, who readily bore a son named Ishmael. After a visit by two men with a message from God, Sarah also conceived, and delivered Isaac. Jealous of Hagar, Sarah forced Abraham to send her and Ishmael off to the desert to die, but God spared them, promising to make a great nation out of Hagar's descendants.

The Book spins this Biblical story of two brothers into the story of the conflict between Arab and Israelite. Ishmael ends up in the wilderness of Paran, believed by some to be in the Sinai (possible, since he married an Egyptian), and by others to be surrounding Mecca. Either way, Ishmael's "kingdom" paled in comparison to the lineage of Isaac, which founded a kingdom under Saul and reached its peak under Solomon.

So the Arabs, outside looking in as Israel built a nation in less than 20 years, wanted once more to rise up and remove the perceived Jewish blot from their midst and reclaim Israel as Palestine, the Roman designation for the province, totally unrelated to the kingdom of the Philistines in the Gaza area. They tried in the past but could never quite break Israeli resistance and were defeated.

Both sides claimed their root from Abraham, but both sides would find themselves locked in a struggle that today still has no end, though some Arab nations have accepted the fact that peace is better for their economy than war, and that their benefactors and supporters of the former Soviet Union could not help them achieve any victory on the battlefield.

In this issue, we explore one of those struggles, the 1967 Six-Day War. The combined might of the Arab world would come against the tiny nation of Israel, nations whose population and land masses dwarfed the Jewish state, in a contest, to use another Biblical example, of David versus Goliath. Looking back over 50 years, we know who prevailed, but with this issue, you will gain insight into why. From the macro view of Superpower conflict by proxy to the leaders of both sides, you will see it unfold as a nation struggles Against the Odds.

Thanks, as always, for joining us in the search for answers.



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