Yom Kippur War 1973

On October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in an effort to force Israel to surrender the land gained in the 1967 Six Day War. The attack was on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur. Caught by surprise, in the war's initial days, Israel suffered severe losses of life, military equipment, and territory, abruptly shattering the euphoria the country had experienced since its show of strength six years earlier. Following an Egyptian refusal to accept a cease-fire and a Soviet airlift of military equipment to bolster Egyptian forces, the United States sent an airlift to Israel enabling her to recover from the first blow and inflict damage on Egypt and Syria. In response, Saudi Arabia led the Arab world in an oil embargo directed against the United States and other western nations. The war officially ended with a U.N.-declared cease-fire, but fighting continued.

When hostilities stopped later that month, the Israeli army held an additional 165 square miles of territory from Syria and had encircled the Egyptian Third Army by the Suez Canal. Efforts for peace treaties at that point failed, and only a year later following U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s “shuttle diplomacy” were disengagement treaties signed by the parties. As per these limited agreements, Israel withdrew from all areas it had acquired from Syria during the 1973 war, and some territory from the 1967 war. Israel also withdrew from parts of the Sinai. Prisoners of war were exchanged, and the Arab world ended its oil embargo. Despite the victory, Israel's near-defeat by the Arab nations highlighted her continued vulnerability.