**1977 European Championship: "We are on the map!"**

In 1977, Israel’s foremost basketball team, Maccabi Tel Aviv, was on fire.

They reached the semi-finals in the European Championship, pitting them against the Russian powerhouse team, CSKA Moscow. The Russian team was considered unbeatable, having won the last four European Championship and coming into the semi-finals without a loss. But 1977 was the height of the Cold War, and the Soviet Union had been boycotting Israel for over a decade, giving military and political support to Israel’s Arab neighbors. The Soviet team refused to allow Israel’s athletes permission to play in Russia or give their athletes permission to play in Israel. The compromise was to allow Maccabi Tel Aviv’s “home game” to take place in a small town in Belgium, neutral territory.

Millions of Israelis tuned into the game, billed by the newspapers as the fight between David and Goliath. When Maccabi Tel Aviv beat Moscow 91-79, thousands of Israelis took to the street spontaneously, with 150,000 people gathering in Tel Aviv at what is now Kikar Rabin.

Team Captain Tal Brody, a former US basketball player who chose to give up his NBA draft place to join the Israeli team, was celebrated as teammates and fans danced the hora around him. "We are on the map! And we are staying on the map – not only in sports but in everything!” Brody shouted in his heavily American-accented Hebrew ("anachnu al hamapa, ve'anahnu nisharim al hamapa!"), and the saying became a new, popular phrase in Israel.

Israel won the European Cup that year, defeating Italy’s Mobilgrigi Varese by one point. It was the Israeli team’s first championship at that level, and at the time, its greatest achievement in any international sporting event.

**Operation Solomon (1991)**

In 1991, with its government under the threat of being toppled, Ethiopia was destabilized. Jewish groups that had been working with Jews in Ethiopia – the Beta Israel – sounded the alarm about their well-being and urged the government of Israel to come to their assistance.

Thanks to support from US President George W. Bush, the Ethiopian government allowed the emigration. In 36 hours, 34 Israeli aircrafts (including Air Force and El Al cargo planes) transported 14,325 people to Israel. In order to rescue as many people as possible, Israeli officials removed all seats from the aircrafts, and the immigrants were squashed into the small spaces, with many flights accommodating as many as 1,100 people. The operation set a world record for the most people on an aircraft with 1,122 on one flight (1,087 were registered but many children hid beneath their mothers’ clothing). Five babies were also born on the planes.

The Israeli government gave special permission for the operation to take place on Shabbat, as it was considered life saving. Many of the immigrants brought only their clothes and cooking instruments, and were met by ambulances, with the one hundred forty frailest of the passengers receiving medical care on the tarmac.

**Operation Entebbe (1976)**

On June 27, 1976, Palestinian terrorists hijacked an Air France plane flying from Tel Aviv to Paris and diverted it to Entebbe, Uganda. The government of Uganda openly supported the terrorists, welcoming them to the country. The terrorists demanded that Israel release Palestinian prisoners held in its jails.

After separating the Israeli and Jewish hostages from the rest, the terrorists released the non-Jews. The pilot chose to remain with the hostages, asserting that they were his responsibility.

The hijackers held the captives for a week in the transit hall of the Entebbe airport. Threatening to kill them if Israel didn’t comply with their demands. A week after the hijacking, on July 4th 1976, the Israel Air Force sent 100 commandos on a daring night rescue mission that saved all but four of the hostages. Colonel Yoni Netanyahu, who led the mission, was killed in the operation, and four commandos were injured. All the hijackers were killed, along with 45 Ugandan soldiers and 45 Ugandan military aircrafts.

**Sadat’s Visit to Israel (1978)**

In an unprecedented move for an Arab leader, Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat traveled to Jerusalem in 1978 to seek a permanent peace settlement with Israel after decades of conflict. Sadat's visit, in which he met with Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and spoke before the Knesset (Parliament), was met with outrage in most of the Arab world.

Despite criticism from Egypt's regional allies, Sadat continued to pursue peace with Begin, and in 1978 the two leaders met again in the United States, where they negotiated a historic agreement with President Jimmy Carter at Camp David, Maryland. The Camp David Accords, signed in September 1978, laid the groundwork for a permanent peace agreement between Egypt and Israel after three decades of hostilities. The final peace agreement – the first between Israel and one of its Arab neighbors – was signed in March 1979. The treaty ended the state of war between the two countries and provided for the establishment of full diplomatic and commercial relations.

Sadat and Begin were jointly awarded the 1978 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. However, Sadat's peace efforts were not so highly acclaimed in the Arab world, and he was assassinated on October 6, 1981, by Muslim extremists in Cairo. Despite Sadat's death, the peace process continued under Egypt's new president, Hosni Mubarak. In 1982, Israel fulfilled the 1979 peace treaty by returning the last segment of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt.

Sadat visits Israel. (2013). The History Channel website. Retrieved 12:52, May 29, 2013, from http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/sadat-visits-israel.

**The Surrounding and Surrender of the Egyptian Army (1973)**

On the eve of Yom Kippur (the holiest day of the year) in 1973, Israel's military intelligence said there was next to no chance of imminent war. Most soldiers were given home leave for the holiday, with very few remaining on the country's borders.

On the morning of October 6, military intelligence discerned signs that had been missed: Syria and Egypt were about to launch a synchronized attack. In the early hours of the war, Syria and Egypt both advanced into Israeli territory. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan wanted to hold a press conference to warn of the "fall of the Third Temple" – a reference to his fear that Israel would be defeated – but Prime Minister Golda Meir forbade him from speaking publicly.

The Soviet Union and the U.S. both backed their respective allies (the Arab countries and Israel), sending huge shipments of military equipment. The U.S. decision to send supplies to Israel was a key to the IDF's eventual turnaround, and enabled Israel to encircle the Egyptian Third Army in Sinai, forcing their surrender. It was the beginning of the close military ties that connect Israel and the U.S. to this day.