

The Yom Kippur War- The Preface .7

הפתיחה של הספר : "מלחמת יום הכיפורים - מבט שונה"

ע"י הרצל שפיר

.....

The Yom Kippur War - A Different Perspective

The events that preceded and led to the war,

The course of the war,

Its results and consequences

1967-1977

Herzl Shafir

Table of Contents

Preface

Part I: From the Six-Day War to the Yom Kippur War

Chapter 1: From the Six-Day War to the End of the War of Attrition - June 1967-August 1970

Chapter 2: Between August 8, 1970 and October 6, 1973

Chapter 3: Egypt and Israel Towards the War - Situation Update

Part I - Conclusion

Part II: The Yom Kippur War (October 6 - October 28, 1973)

Chapter 4: The Deterrence and the Warning that Failed to Work

Chapter 5: The War - October 6-8

Chapter 6: The War, Steps and Actions - October 9 - 14

Chapter 7: The War, Steps and Actions - October 15 - 17

Chapter 8: The War, Steps and Actions - October 18 - 22

Chapter 9: The War, Steps and Actions - October 23 - 28

Part II - Conclusion

Part III: The Personnel Directorate and the Instruction Department during the War

Chapter 10: Personnel Figures, Reinforcements, and Casualties

Chapter 11: The Personnel Directorate in the War - Establishing Staff Entities and Units, and Operating the Instruction Layout

Chapter 12: Operating the Personnel Directorate's Layouts during the War

Part III - Conclusion

Part IV: After the War: The IDF HQ - Arrangements in the Field, the IDF's New Multi-Year Plans; Southern Command; The Israel-Egypt Meeting in Ismailia

Chapter 13: The Separation of Forces and Redeployment in the Sinai and Golan Heights

Chapter 14: Stabilizing the System - Head of the Operations Directorate: Discussions and Conclusions for Preparing the "Etgar" and "Matmon" Multi-Year Plans

Chapter 15: What We Learned from the War

Chapter 16: The "Etgar" and "Matmon" Multi-Year Plans

Chapter 17: From Heading the Operations Directorate to Heading Southern Command - 1975-1978

Part IV - Conclusion

Appendices

Clarification:

This book was written and edited over the course of several years, starting from December 2004 and up to June 2017. Different parts and sections of the book have already been published and brought to the attention of various persons and elements during the years in which the book was being written and edited. The book is presented here in its entirety, with all its parts.

Preface

The Yom Kippur War was an extraordinary, highly formative, influential and image-shattering event. The Israeli public has referred to this war as a national "failure." It was followed by national, political, military and social changes throughout the country. Hundreds of books and thousands of articles have been written on the subject by journalists, members of academia and researchers. Commanders and staff members wrote about their units - tales of battles and exemplary acts of individuals and teams - mostly from the personal perspective of what they witnessed on the battlefield. There were those who wrote either about the front or the arena they fought in, or about a particular topic or event. Furthermore, movies were made and screened, depicting battles, interviews and meetings with various commanders and assorted individuals. Commentators presented pictures of military or political situations, as well as assessments, reactions and explanations as to what happened in a particular formation, during a certain event, or on a specific day of combat. Much has been written concerning the intelligence: about the surprise and the warnings that were or were not there; about the conduct of the IDF Military Intelligence, the Mossad and the political echelon; about the "special measures" that existed but were not activated, or were only activated in part; and about the influence and involvement of the major powers before, during and after the war.

The end of the war saw the establishment of the Agranat National Committee of Inquiry, headed by Supreme Court President Dr. Shimon Agranat, whose activity was limited to the days prior to the war and to the first few days only (until October 8, 1973). These limitations prevented the committee from examining all that transpired in a complete and critical manner, and in its investigation, it in fact handled just the military aspect, while refraining from investigating the political echelon.

It can be stated with certainty that the Yom Kippur War has been discussed and written about in Israel at a scale that cannot be compared to any other war. People still write about it, and will continue to do so. One of the reasons for the considerable number of documents is the fact **that this war was not summarized in an immediate, orderly and institutionalized manner** by the IDF once it came to an end, as is generally carried out.

When I was appointed to head the General Staff / Operations Directorate after the war (April 1974) and Mordechai (Mota) Gur was appointed IDF Chief of Staff, I presented to him a template and timetable for the orderly preparation of the IDF's summary of the war. Gur initially consulted with Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, and after looking into the matter with him, he informed me of their decision not to conduct such a summary **at that time**. When I asked to know why, I was given the following reasons:

- The Agranat Committee - the commanders were busy preparing for their testimonies before the committee.
- The "war of the generals" within the IDF. The names of those involved were mentioned: the wartime Chief of Staff, David (Dado) Elazar; the Head of the Southern Command during the war, Shmuel Gonen (Gorodish); the Commander of 162nd Division, Maj. Gen. Avraham Edan (Bern); the Commander of the 143rd Division, Maj. Gen. Ariel Sharon; and the commander of the southern front, Lt. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev.
- The rift between the political and military echelons, and especially between the IDF senior officials and the minister of defense, and even the government.
- The lengthy reserve service - the negative mood and the tense atmosphere among the IDF's reserve forces.
- The results of the war (the large number of casualties) and the general public's mood, as well as the country's financial situation.

Dayan's refusal to prepare the summary of the war was clear (this was also expressed in a practical manner during the investigation of the Agranat Committee). However, initially I did not understand the Chief of Staff's acceptance of this decision. I realized only later that Mordechai Gur was the IDF's attaché in Washington during the war, and

as such did not participate in the fighting. In my opinion, preparing a summary about the activity of the generals and commanders in the various HQs, and about those who fought in the field when he was not there, seemed to be something he deemed inappropriate or unworthy of. And so it happened that **the IDF did not conduct a summing up right at the end of the Yom Kippur War with those who prepared, planned and carried it out.**

Personal Introduction

I was actively involved in the planning and the implementation during the period of time covered in this book. Prior to the Six-Day War in 1967, I served in three key positions in the IDF's Armored Corps: as commander of the Armored Corps School, Commander of the 7th Brigade, and as Deputy Commander of the Armored Corps. During the Six-Day War, I served as the Deputy Commander of Maj. Gen. Israel Tal's Steel Division, with a small command post that moved along with the forces. From late 1969 until September 1972, I served as the Chief of Operations in the IDF General Staff, when Ezer Weitzman and David Elazar served as heads of the Operations Directorate. During the War of Attrition, I dealt with operational planning, which included the planning of targets for the Israeli Air Force's depth strikes, raids and operations of Special Forces along the front line and deep inside Egyptian territory. Furthermore, I dealt with budgeting the fortification layout along the Bar-Lev line and supervising its construction; I took part in the discussions concerning the establishment of the order of battle (OrBat) ahead of the Yom Kippur War and the preparation of the proposal/possibility of an interim agreement between Israel and Egypt (in 1971).

In September 1972, I was appointed Head of the Personnel Directorate at the IDF General Staff. I was involved in the General Staff's discussions, in the operational discussion groups and in operational plans. My primary mission was to reduce the duration of the regular IDF military service. However, reality presented me with a different mission. During the Yom Kippur War, when I headed the Personnel Directorate, I was assigned the task of coordinating the chief ground corps officers (armored, infantry, engineering, and artillery) as well as the Instruction Department, along with the entire corps instruction layout (command of instruction and the instruction bases). I appealed to Maj. Gen. (Res.) Meir Zorea (Zaro) to head the Instruction Department. Together with the Personnel Directorate's layout, we created a unique system that worked effectively throughout the war and after it, providing

responses to issues concerning personnel, reinforcements, building new forces and units, gathering tank crews, reinforcing and providing assistance to the fighting forces, operating the instruction layout and primarily caring for the casualties (fatalities, wounded, MIAs and POWs).

When I was asked by IDF Chief of Staff David Elazar to accept the role of Head of the Personnel Directorate, we also discussed my next role after that - head of a command. I told him that I preferred the Southern Command, having spent most of my IDF service in positions in that area. The Chief of Staff mentioned that Maj. Gen Ariel Sharon would conclude his role as Head of Southern Command in the first half of 1974 (meaning two years later), and I would be appointed to replace him. But as things often go, Sharon decided to retire from service earlier, in the middle of 1973, in order to launch his political career. Before his decision to retire from the IDF, Sharon closely examined whether or not Israel would be facing a war. Upon receiving a negative response from the Chief of Staff and from Israeli intelligence, he was put at ease and decided to continue pursuing his goals. Since I had been assured I would be given command after Sharon, the Chief of Staff approached me and said, "Unfortunately, since there won't be a war in the coming years, Sharon has decided to leave and enter politics. You are now responsible for planning the IDF's main objective - shortening the service time. I can't replace you now. We've got plenty of time. We'll wrap up the matter of the service time and then you can get either the Northern or the Southern Command. It's easier for me right now to take Gorodish (Maj. Gen. Shmuel Gonen) out of the Instruction Department and into the Southern Command." Contrary to these assessments, Sadat "intervened" and the Yom Kippur War erupted in October 1973, with myself as Head of the Personnel Directorate and Shmuel Gonen heading the Southern Command.

In the mid-April of 1974, I was appointed as head of the Operations Directorate and as Acting Chief of Staff (in the absence of the role of deputy chief of staff). I headed the Israeli delegation at the negotiations on the disengagement agreement with Syria and the redeployment on the Golan Heights, which was held in Geneva (May 30-June 5, 1974). I also managed the Israeli delegation to the Geneva Conference that prepared the Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (September 1975). At the same time, I was responsible for preparing the IDF's multi-year plans "Etgar" (1974-1979) and Matmon (1980-1984) - plans intended to rehabilitate, build, organize, and equip the

IDF with an increased OrBat after the Yom Kippur War, to prepare for the possibility of resuming war with a potential coalition of states (Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan). Minister of Defense Shimon Peres and I presented the general situation during a meeting with the US Secretary of Defense, and details of these plans were handed by the IAF and Navy commanders to the United States Department of Defense (the Pentagon). In addition, within the framework of my role as Head of Operations, I took part in Defense Minister Peres' visit to South Africa, then, separately visited the German army and the German General Staff.

After the Sinai Interim Agreement (September 1975), and on the assumption that Israel would be expected to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula in the future, I prepared the basic plan for the IDF's evacuation from the Sinai to the south of the country. From April 1976 until the start of 1978, I served as Head of the Southern Command, while most of the Sinai expanse was still in Israel's hands. My main task was the establishment, instruction and training on the main parts of the Etgar OrBat, while, in parallel, maintaining the force separation lines, dealing with routine security and improving readiness towards the possibility of renewed combat.

In November 1977, together with the head of Military Intelligence, Shlomo Gazit, I participated in a meeting between Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman and the top brass of the Egyptian army. After Sadat's visit to Israel, I took part in the Israeli-Egyptian summit in Ismailia (December 1977), which in retrospect can be defined as a meeting on "the road towards peace."

On what am I basing my words in writing this book?

First of all, I witnessed and was **personally** involved in the planning and implementation of most of the events that transpired in this period. The IDF's failure during the initial days of the Yom Kippur War bothered me a great deal, and I have devoted time and effort to studying and examining the issues from a variety of angles - military and political - in order to allow for a broad, practical discussion of the events.

Secondly, since I was a battalion commander (I established the 52nd Tank Battalion in 1957-1958) and until my last job in the IDF (Head of Southern Command), I kept a written record. Whenever I initiated a meeting or discussion, I would take notes of the main subjects mentioned, as well as the main points of my summary; when I was invited to a meeting or discussion, I documented my understanding and impressions of some

of the participants' comments. It was not stenography: I brought notes of the points I wanted to discuss in advance (I did not always present all of them), and recorded the general conclusion. Things were jotted down in a small pocket notepad or notebook. At the end of every session, I wrote on the documents "To be filed under drafts and summaries," and the records were placed in the appropriate file in my office. Such a file, which would include my written material was handed over to me at the end of my tenure in each position I held: That is how I kept the files, notepads and notebooks over the course of the decades that have passed since my military service. These are testimonies of my recollections, but it is not my intent to present them as "written testimony." Therefore, I do not record or direct to references.

As someone who served for decades in the military-political establishment, I have observed and taken part in producing summaries, descriptions and explanations, either in writing or verbally (and written down after the fact) by heads of bureaus, staff officers and others. I found that texts did not always faithfully represent everything that was said, agreed upon or transpired. At times, writers tended to emphasize the words of their commanders. Furthermore, in descriptions of battles or various situation assessments, there were sometimes serious contradictions in the description of statements and the processes and events that took place, by different people involved in the events themselves (from the same division or from adjacent units). In those cases where I encountered this phenomenon, and where it was important for me to refer to it, I indicate who was involved, what was involved and where things were described.

Following publication of Shimon Golan's important book, *A War on Yom Kippur - Decision-making in the Supreme Command during the Yom Kippur War*, I made use of his work to examine the events I had recorded in the General Staff HQ. Things were identical in most cases, but there were cases in which Golan's details (especially when not discussing the chief of staff's activities directly) are incomplete, or lacking details found in other, complementary forums, such as the forum of division heads, meetings with the deputy Chief of Staff and so on.

Thirdly as been stated that much has already been written about this era, especially regarding the Yom Kippur War, my intention, in contrast, is to examine what happened before the war with regards to the issues of policy and defense doctrine, the situation assessments, the planning and the operations in the field. As to the war itself, I do not intend to add more battle courses or new facts from the field (although one can assume that those will be present); Rather, I wish to place the emphasis on the examination

of the processes, the assessments and pictures of the situation, the various plans, the means and methods used, as well as the presentation of the main factors that influenced the various procedures and their results. The objective is to evaluate the criteria, the goals and the methods of implementation, and to offer my own views as to whether the implementation was right or wrong and why, and whether things could have been done differently, for the purpose of learning and drawing lessons for the future.

As for the postwar period, I will present data and assessments concerning the primary discussions held and the conclusions reached. The emphasis from my perspective will be on **the impact of the war's results** on the plans, actions and steps taken in terms of "what we learned from the war," as well as assessments and considerations made ahead of and during the rehabilitation and building of the IDF's OrBat in its multi-year plans, as well as the political moves made after the war.

The Principled and Methodical Approach

My main question is: Were the failed results in the initial days of the Yom Kippur War actually a consequence of its beginning, rather than of the preparations made or not made in an earlier period? From a factual standpoint, **the IDF failed during the first days of the war, primarily in the Sinai front and in the operation of the Israeli Air Force.** In this book, I wish to examine whether this was mainly due to the conduct and erroneous decisions of the senior political and military establishment during the day or two preceding the war and/or a day or two after it began, and **whether the element of surprise** (following failure to deter and insufficient warning) **was one of the main reasons for the initial failures** In my assessment, the complete and true picture is very far from this:

- The Yom Kippur War was influenced by perceptions, events and actions that happened much earlier, in addition to the fact that the defense policy had not been brought up to date since the Six-Day War.
- The failures of the first days of the war stemmed from severe mistakes made by the people in charge even **before** the war erupted, and later - due to planning failures, actions and events **during** the initial days of fighting.
- The results of the war greatly influenced the IDF's future planning and had a significant impact on political and social events, actions and changes in the post-war era.

Over the years (perhaps at too late a time), the material I absorbed concerning the war has crystallized into a comprehensive picture, one that takes a different view of what transpired **before, during, and after the war**. Undoubtedly, **the events and results of the first days of combat had a decisive effect on the entire course and outcome of the war**. Why did we fail in those days, and could we have assessed, prepared and planned things differently?

This book analyzes the reasons for these failures, and even attempts to present how some of them could have been prevented. One could say that **prior to the war, Israel lacked an adequate national situation assessment**, one that initially examined and analyzed the political-defense level, **updated** (based on the results of the Six-Day War) **and determined the defense policy and the principles of Israel's defense doctrine**. It is from this basis that the **outline** defining the **IDF's goals and modus operandi for the future** should have been derived. As it derived from the nation's political leadership, there was room to define the goals and tasks to be achieved at the front-HQ level, on the basis of factual data and its proper assessment (without illusions regarding a situation or activity not likely to materialize), including proper study and examination of facts and the significance of critical situations. Such situations include whether "deterrence" existed and what the true capabilities of this "deterrence" were. The lessons learned from the Six-Day War, the War of Attrition, and the various exercises carried out by the IDF (at the General Staff, command and division levels) prior to the Yom Kippur War are also important.

If a **comprehensive** situation assessment had been carried out (at the political and military levels), it would have been possible **to assess, plan and prepare differently, and to act in a concerted and correct manner from the very first day of combat**. This is not an "in hindsight" statement; it is a sobering proposition based on the examination of data and facts as well as on thought and assessment of alternative decisions that could have been carried out at the right time, some of them well before the start of the campaign. Had things been done this way, **the war could have unfolded differently**. Therefore, I saw it as my duty to present my input on this war under the title of *"The Yom Kippur War - A Different Perspective."*

The four sections of this book describe the main events and actions over the periods of time discussed.

The first section deals with the period **from the Six-Day War to the Yom Kippur War** - events and developments from mid 1967 until the start of the war in October 1973. The Yom Kippur War, as it was prepared, planned and carried out, was greatly affected by the results of the war in 1967 and the events surrounding it. These range from opinions voiced and decisions agreed (or not agreed) upon by the political echelon and by commanders and individuals who governed the situation in the state and in the IDF over a long period of time. In essence, this was an influence (sometimes not even a conscious one) that persisted from the end of the Six-Day War (when the defense policy was not updated); passed through the planning and construction of the Bar-Lev line (the "Maoz" plan); the War of Attrition; the establishment and instruction of the IDF OrBat; the target-oriented exercises, including the crossing issue; and ended with discussions and a determination of the war's objectives and the implications thereof, primarily the defensive plan in the Sinai. In addition, there were directives stemming from Israel's international policy and relations, from attempts to reach interim agreements between Israel and Egypt during the years 1971-1973, the IDF's "Blue and White Readiness" campaign in May-August 1973, and the preparations for the war. The first section deals with what we learned from all of these, and whether the IDF was prepared for the war that erupted in 1973.

The second and third sections deal with **the Yom Kippur War itself**.

The second section deals with describing the war and its events: its start was affected by a failed attempt at deterrence, a deterrence that did not accomplish its objective and by the unexpectedness of the war. An important role was played by the size and scope of the forces allocated to each front, the physical preparations in the field and the operational-tactical plans carried out before the war in the Sinai and the Golan Heights, in the commands, the IAF, and the Israeli Navy.

The review of the events **in the Golan Heights** includes a description of the outpost layout, the obstacles and the tank positions; the insufficient deployment and allocation of the forces; the Syrian successes, and later - the staunch resistance of the defense battle; the introduction of reserve forces in a coordinated manner; the counterattacks that made it possible to retake captured territory relatively quickly, and to add territory;

the continued struggle in the Golan Heights until the ceasefire, the separation of the forces and the redeployment of the Syrian military.

The review of the events **on the canal front** deals with the goal of the war – namely, defense, even though the manner of combat is offense - when there is essentially no defensive plan. This includes the late use of the regular forces; the fighting on October 6-7, including the lack of control over the situation, the wide deployment in the field, the attacks with small forces, as opposed to larger concentrated ones, and in fact the failure to achieve the objective of containment; and the fighting on October 8, headed by the failed attacks of reserve divisions on erroneous missions. It includes the story of the strongholds; the turnaround that followed the failure of the Egyptian attack on October 14; the crossing of the canal on October 15-17, with all its difficulties and achievements; the activity west of the Canal in "the Land of Goshen" until the actual ceasefire (October 28), and what it meant on the ground; the IAF's role during the war; the Egyptian descriptions of these stages; the influence of the political-defensive measures, and the involvement and assistance of the United States and the Soviet Union to both sides.

The hasty battle procedure imposed by the IDF General Staff since the start of the war essentially took place for its entire duration; this in turn severely affected the battle procedures in the IDF's formations, in the field units and in the HQs at the home front, and had an impact on the involvement of the General Staff and the commanders in the campaign. As with the first section, the second section seeks to examine what we learned from all these events and occurrences.

The third section deals with **the operation of the Personnel Directorate and the Instruction Department during the war**. This section is devoted especially to the workings of the Personnel Directorate's layout and the instruction layout during the war. The results of the war, the considerable casualties (fatalities, wounded, MIAs and POWs) and the impact on their families and on the public on the home front necessitated quick responses, including organizational changes and the establishment of new entities to handle this. The situation on the fronts required the flow of reinforcements, not just in terms of personnel but also in terms of weaponry, in addition to the establishment of new combat units. The instruction layout, which was paralyzed due to the transfer of commanders and professionals to forces on the front by emergency appointments, had to be reactivated. The detailing of the activities of both the Personnel Directorate and

of the Instruction Department during the war is teeming with facts and statistical data, pointing to the results of the war.

The activities of the Personnel Directorate and the Instruction Department in the Yom Kippur War created a unique system, one that operated in two arenas simultaneously. The first dealt with the provisioning of responses and treatments to approximately 10,000 casualties (fatalities, wounded, MIAs and POWs) and their families, over a long period of time, including after the ceasefire. The second dealt with reinforcing and providing assistance to the fighting forces by way of personnel, tank crews, establishing new combat units, training commanders and professionals and by sending them to reinforce and strengthen units that were hit, during and after the war.

The fourth section deals with **the impact of the war's outcome on future events**, from November 1973 until the summit between Israel and Egypt in Ismailia (December 1977), preceding the upcoming peace.

On October 25, 1973, a ceasefire was declared between Israel and Egypt (its implementation in the field only began on October 28). In the Syrian arena, the fire continued until June 1974. The results of the war were already clear, and allowed the examination of the implications stemming from them, as well as their direct or indirect influence on a series of political and military events that occurred during the following years. These include the acquisition and supply of weapons from the United States **and the IDF's multi-year plans "Etgar" and "Matmon"** - plans that were designed to rehabilitate, organize, prepare, equip, and train the reinforced OrBat for military conflicts anticipated in the future.

The fourth section describes the activities surrounding the planning and implementation of the "Etgar" plan while stabilizing the various systems in the new situation that was created. This section will also deal with insights from the war and conclusions for future implementation; with the Agreement for the Separation of Forces and their redeployment between Israel and Syria (May 31-June 5, 1974); and with the Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt (September 4, 1975). It will also deal with my relationship with the minister of defense; with my tours, including my visits to South Africa and to the German army and general staff; with the plans for the IDF's evacuation from Egypt; with my role as Head of Southern Command during Sadat's visit to Israel (November 1977) and at the meeting between Israel and Egypt in Ismailia in December

1977; and lastly, with the international involvement in the region in the wake of the war.

I assume that an ordinary reader who was not involved in the Yom Kippur War or did not live as an adult in the immediate period before or after the war, may find this book difficult to read. It is my hope that of the approximately 380,000 IDF reserve soldiers (tens of thousands of officers among them) who took part in this war, and those who serve in the IDF today, there will be quite a few curious individuals who will wish to read the various sections of the book. It is also my hope that there will be researchers, historians, academics, journalists, statesmen and politicians, members of "Tzevet" and "Hever" and members of the Armored Corps Association, who will find an interest and new insights in this work.