

ON YOM KIPPUR IN 1967 ...

by Yehuda Amichai

On Yom Kippur in 1967, the Year of Forgetting, I put on
my dark holiday clothes and walked to the Old City of Jerusalem.
For a long time I stood in front of an Arab's hole-in-the-wall shop,
not far from the Damascus Gate, a shop with
buttons and zippers and spools of thread
in every color and snaps and buckles.
A rare light and many colors, like an open Ark.
I told him in my heart that my father too
had a shop like this, with thread and buttons.
I explained to him in my heart about all the decades
and the causes and the events, why I am now here
and my father's shop was burned there and he is buried here.
When I finished, it was time for the Closing of the Gates prayer.
He too lowered the shutters and locked the gate
and I returned, with all the worshippers, home.

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Ethics of the sons

Globalization has given rise to new concepts of human rights and new codes of behavior for leaders. Ha'aretz explores the developing ethical norms

By Saguy GreenSharon: Efforts to put him on trial.

A new group of people was recently added to the list of those who get anxious at the idea of flying in a plane. It includes army and police officers, intelligence and government officials, diplomats and leaders. These people are not overly concerned about the hours spent suspended between heaven and earth; they are more focused on what might happen when the plane lands. New conceptions, norms and codes of behavior are making them persona non grata in several countries. In some places, these codes have spurred the passage of laws that permit their arrest as soon as they set foot in the arrivals terminal, at which point they could be put on trial for crimes against humanity.

Over the past year, the new codes have already become a source of concern to public figures in Israel as well as the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice and the judicial branch. One example may be found in a BBC documentary broadcast in June, which depicted Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as a war criminal, by virtue of his involvement in the Sabra and Chatila massacre in Lebanon 1982. Other examples are the attempt to put Sharon on trial in Belgium for alleged genocide, and the call to try Carmi Gillon, Israel's ambassador to Denmark, for his involvement in the torture of suspects when he served as director of the Shin Bet security service.

Even if the two men are not put on trial (two weeks ago, Denmark threw out the complaint against Gillon), many Westerners will still continue to think of them as undesirables. What is it that led to this attitude, and the development of codes of behavior and ethics, which were not embraced, or at least not implemented, until recently?

The historic starting point from which individuals began to be tried for "crimes against humanity" was the Nuremberg trials, held in 1945-46. The international tribunal sentenced dozens of Nazis. But the Cold War broke out immediately afterward, and the world was divided into two hostile ideological camps. Human rights became a cudgel wielded by the superpowers, and everything became political. The West emphasized individual freedoms, democracy and freedom of expression, concepts that were ridiculed by the Eastern Bloc:

"What are these human rights worth if people can't earn a livelihood with dignity, and do not benefit from adequate and equal health and education?"

Social unity is the bedrock from which human rights may be advanced, says Dr. Moshe Hirsch, an expert on international law at Hebrew University. In 1991, with the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of the balance of terror and the old ideologies, a rare collaboration emerged between East and West. One of the first fruits of that effort was the implementation of a UN Security Council decision - which had remained paralyzed during the long era of U.S.-Soviet hostility - to set up in 1993 an international tribunal at The Hague, which would decide on crimes against humanity that took place in the former Yugoslavia. At first, only soldiers and junior officers were put on trial. With the deployment of NATO troops, however, higher-ranking officers were captured. But on June 29, 2001, dictator Slobodan Milosevic, the former president of Yugoslavia, was extradited.

The decision by newly elected Yugoslavian president Vojislav Kostunica to extradite his predecessor to the International Court at The Hague speaks volumes about the code of behavior and morality that now holds currency. "True, economic interests played a role there," says Hirsch. "The international message was, 'If you want aid - extradite.' But Kostunica also understood that part of the price that Yugoslavia would have to pay to be considered an enlightened country by the global community was to rid itself of Milosevic."

No excuses

In October 1998, Augusto Pinochet, the former Chilean dictator, was placed under house arrest after coming to London for medical treatment. A Spanish court asked Britain to extradite him so it could put him on trial for genocide, terror and torture. "In the opinion of Chilean society, the case was already closed," says Hirsch. "He was given a quasi immunity or clemency. And then the world came and said, 'So what if they forgave him in his homeland? These are universal rights, the quashing of which cannot be excused.'"

In other words, the assertion that "It's an internal matter. Don't get involved," no longer applies?

"The jurisdiction of affairs given over to the exclusive authority of the state has been dramatically curtailed in recent decades. Israel, for example, has realized that allegations of its violations of human rights are not given onto its sole authority. For instance, discrimination claims by Israeli Arabs are also brought up in international forums, not to mention what is happening in the territories, outside the borders of the State of Israel."

Pinochet won the first legal proceedings, claiming that he committed these acts as the head of state, and that he therefore deserved immunity. But then, international pressure began to build. The argument put forth by the public was that the global rules of the game have changed, and that a man like Pinochet can no longer go unpunished. "In the second session," says Hirsch, "the court simply constructed a fiction, or if you will, offered a new interpretation, by arguing that no one has the right, by virtue of his official position as head of state, to murder thousands of people." In the end, Pinochet was released on the basis of his poor health. He was not deported to Spain, and he returned to Chile, where hearings are now being held to determine if he is fit to stand trial.

The next stage was in 1999. That year, the Belgian parliament amended a special law passed in 1993, which permits the prosecution of persons who have violated international law or the Geneva convention, even if said crimes were committed in another country. The parliament also extended the law to include genocide. It is on this charge that Brussels is now trying to place Sharon on trial.

What interest does the Belgian parliament have in prosecuting war criminals? In this case, it seems, such interests do not come into play. Rather, it stems from an ideological and moral position. Cold War-era tensions are gone, as are the need or desire to protect criminals.

Along with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the boundaries between sovereign countries are also being obscured. In the past, the state was a citadel that protected its citizens and government actions from all external trouble and harm. But today, because of cheap flights, the media, the Internet and migration, the world has become smaller. This familiar process is called globalization, and it has many negative sides to it.

However, on this score, of altered codes vis-a-vis crimes against humanity, it also works for the good, argues Hirsch. "The world has become closer and more exposed. Everything pushes its

way into the family living room. The massacre or murder of babies isn't something that happens out of sight, but which is reported on and displayed every evening on TV. Things have become more tangible, and then all of a sudden no one wants to have anything to do with it."

The same reports are also submitted by new groups that have come into being, concurrent with the weakening of the state over the past decade. These are the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate worldwide, with high media profiles, to achieve their aims and present their beliefs. They include Amnesty International, Human Rights March, physicians and lawyers for human rights, and many others. Denmark, for example, has a large center for handling complaints by victims of torture. Denmark is also the first country to have enacted a law forbidding torture, so it is no wonder that Carmi Gillon was given such a cool reception there.

And what is the downside of globalization?

"Since the country is weakened," says Hirsch, "it has a lot less opportunity to control what happens on its territory, and non-state bodies that are adept at using media and transportation systems exploit it to the hilt. The strongest examples of this are traffickers in drugs, women and children, and terrorist organizations. The group that carried out the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon last week made very good use of the new tools of globalization; we see how even the might of a superpower like the United States is weakened in the face of these non-state bodies - even by a few individuals who get on a plane with knives in their carry-ons."

How will this act affect the new ethics?

"The key word here is conscience. In terms of its scope, this is an unprecedented event, which has struck at the collective conscience - again, by way of the television, which brought the horrific footage and the dimensions of the disaster into the living rooms of every citizen of the world, broadcast live, without delay, repetitively. The images are burned into the memories of viewers, and will affect the atmosphere in which those who carried out the attack are perceived. If one of its planners manages to get out of the United States, even to a state like Iran or Libya, you can assume that the international pressure will force them to extradite him."

Does the media play a role in delineating the new codes?

"The media is driven by ideology, empowers it, and serves it, as well. Sometimes it has its own interests. The BBC, for instance, could have filmed a program investigating whether the British pilots who bombed Yugoslavia violated human rights, with the title, 'Is Tony Blair a War Criminal?' It chose to deal with Sharon. One can only guess why."

In general, adds Hirsch, the new ideology is mixed up with fads and self-interest. War crimes really are immoral and revolting, but who wants to be counted among the lepers of the modern world? Pariah status is no longer attractive. Countries that violate the new codes will lose income from tourism, and a ban on or advisory against foreign travel is a very heavy penalty nowadays."

However, all of this still seems lights years away from us, On both the tangible level - where human rights violations take place daily - and the fundamental level, most Israelis label the new codes, forged by Europeans, and the attempt to judge two past leaders of Israel's defense establishment, as the acts of a gaggle of hypocritical bleeding hearts who have no idea what it means to live here. So Hirsch's reply when asked if the new codes embraced by the West will ever seep in here, is a little surprising: "I think it is already gradually seeping into the personal morality. It causes a lot of people to redefine their consciences. And even at the national level, acting in contravention of the codes will push us further out of the club of enlightened countries. It is a price that I doubt that many Israelis would be willing to pay." Especially if it means they end up evolving a unique form of fear of flying.

Fur better, fur worse

The high point was sometime back in the '90s, when a single stage was graced by the nude Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Christy Turlington and other supermodels of the time, sporting only the flimsiest strips of cloth that read "we'd rather go naked than wear fur." Photographers covering the event must have concurred. From that day on, the code was obvious: fur was taboo, in large part due to the massive damage the industry does to wild animals and the cruel conditions in which foxes, minks and chinchillas are raised and killed.

Fur coats remain essential items only in the wardrobes of wives of despotic rulers of lands that never see temperatures below 40 degrees; Eskimos, which have an irregular supply of Vogue and Elle; and maybe a few Polish aunts from the Mann Auditorium who were sure Kate Moss was a certain dessert at Apropos.

The Wall Street Journal reported last month that in 1972, there were 980 manufacturers of fur clothing, and by 1992, only 210. The number continues to dwindle because the older-generation designers are retiring, and there is no one replacing them. There are at present 400 mink farms in America - less than half the number a decade ago.

In Israel, reports Daniel Ehrlich of Anonymous, the association for protection of animal rights, four or five shops specializing in the manufacture and sales of furs have closed in recent years, due to low demand. "We do not live in a country where you can wear furs all that often during the year. Nevertheless, we still hold a demonstration every winter in front of the shops still in business on Ben-Yehuda Street in Tel Aviv, and distribute informative material on the subject," says Erlich.

There was a time when hating fur was tres chic, and rightly so. But suddenly, in the past few months, photographs have been cropping up with items made of fur by designers who for more than a decade never dared to be linked to the industry. Similarly, magazines that until a year or two ago would have risked a consumer boycott had they expressed any sympathy for the fur trade, are now printing the photographs with equanimity, if not exuberance: New York Magazine reported that one of the 15 most sought-after items this coming autumn is a mink handbag designed by Jay Mandel (a mere \$3,500 at Bergdorf Goodman). Meanwhile, Talk Magazine announced this month that one of the eight items on the longest retail waiting list in America is a Christian Dior fur hat that goes for \$810.

Fashion designers and the newspapers that report on them are showing signs of being fed up with moral fashion. The new code once again permits the wearing of carcasses of sables, foxes and seals. That is, at least, until Linda Evangelista feels like getting out of bed again without anything on.

Intifada newspeak

One interpretation of the word "code" is secret writing. It can also be a word that is meant to symbolize another word. The just-ended year was especially productive for revivalists of coded Hebrew. They invented new words and expressions, the sort that can make anything sound plausible to the Israeli ear, and depict reality as the unity government, the IDF and the spirit of consensus see it. The new code words have been gleaned from newspaper, radio, television, IDF Spokesman's Office statements, on the one hand, and from members of Indemedia, the independent media group, on the other. They are presented together with a brief explanation where required, synonyms (notation of their origin, in parentheses) and Hebrew transliteration of the original [in brackets, where required] .

1 "Israeli civilians" (defense establishment) or "settlers" (media)

1 "Al-Aqsa Intifada" (media) or "war" (political establishment) or "armed conflict" (defense establishment)

1 "Restraint" [ipuk] (political establishment)

1 "Forbearance" [havlaga] (political establishment)

1 "Strategic decision of the other side to adopt violence" (defense establishment)

1 "Escalation" [haslama] (all)

1 "Armed deterrence" [harta'a hama] (all)

1 "Liquidations" [hisulim] and "liquidation policy" (media) or "focused preventive action" [peulat sikul mimukedet] (security establishment) or "commando action"

1 "Exposing" [hisuf] and "exposing action," meaning: uprooting of Palestinian orchards (defense establishment)

1 "Specious Palestinian allegation" or "Palestinian propaganda" (defense establishment)

1 "Israeli public-relations failure" [keshel hasbarati shel Yisrael] (media)

1 "Breathing encirclement" [keter noshem] and "Smothering encirclement" [keter honek], meaning: imposing curfews, blocking access routes and preventing Palestinian movement (defense establishment)

1 "Prevention of entry to Israel" (defense establishment) or "closure" [seger] (media)

1 "Arrest" [ma'atzar] (defense establishment) or "hijacking" [hatifa] (media)

1 "Seam zone" [merhav hatefer], meaning: area along the Green Line (all)

1 "Delayed at roadblock" [ikuv bemahsom] (defense establishment)

1 "Shooting attack" [pigua yeri] (media)

1 "The murderous terrorist shooting attack," "The contemptible lethal terrorist attack," and "The criminal terrorist car bomb" may be exchanged for word combinations like "The lethal terrorist attack" and "The terrorist car bomb" (media)

1 "Security measures" [tze'adim bit'honi'im] (defense establishment) or "reprisal action" [peulat gmul], "deterrence action" [peulat harta'a] and "punishment action" [peulat anisha]" (media and political establishment)

1 "The IDF expresses sorrow for the death of the child" (defense establishment)

1 "Letting off steam" [shihzur kitur] meaning: lynch attempts by Jews on Palestinians after a terrorist attack (media)

1 "Work accident" [teunat avoda] (defense establishment)

Exit code

Internet, Nasdaq and option/ QA, VP and NT/ Mirabilis, Chromatis and Checkpoint/ Investment, round and milestone/ long hair, sandals and food coupons/ espresso machine, Java, and lots of C++/ Mamram, Air Force and eight-two hundred/ start-up, exit, dot-com, dot-no-com/ dot-full/ dot-end

It isn't a stanza from a song ... then again, maybe it is. A song of lamentation composed of some of the code names that for two years supported the huge high-tech bubble hovering above us all, an especially dazzling comet that fired hearts and imaginations. Many of the inhabitants of this particular planet are regular visitors to the academics' unemployment office. "It's unbelievable," says one friend. "You meet everyone there - guys who were with you in school, the army, university, and you haven't seen in a long time. It's pretty nice."

Someone else who was there and who has charmingly described its inner workings is Gidi Raff. For a year or so he was responsible for content at a start-up, and wrote a weekly column in Ma'ariv about his escapades. The columns were recently collected in a book, "Diary of a Start-Up: On The Way To Mecca" (Keter). Raff is now studying film in San Francisco. From there, he engages in a telephone conversation about the particular codes that propelled the New (and former) Economy.

What is the code on which the Israeli start-up people operated?

"`Exit'. People there really believed that in another month their company was going to bring in \$400 million. As a result, the whole business lacked any and all proportion, but it was very funny."

And also full of self-confidence and self-importance.

"Within the companies, at least at the beginning, there was not much cynicism. The bosses believed in their product very much. They believed in `success' as a concept, as a keyword. And they had to lead the whole company. Their message was that all the employees had to believe in the product as much as they did. And the employees believed in it, because they worked awfully hard - if we can agree that sitting in front of a screen 12 or more hours a day is hard work - and hoped that their efforts were not in vain, because they were young people making huge amounts of money, and what motivated everyone, after all, was the options."

The book describes the entrepreneurs as being completely and utterly devoted to the company. Isn't there something of a fairy tale in that statement?

"I knew one entrepreneur who, whenever I asked how he was, would start telling me about how the company was doing. The entrepreneurs were especially devoted to the idea. I think it also had to do with the pressure. You have to bear in mind that people had invested millions of dollars in them."

In the book, you describe a situation in which the hero - you - and the other employees spent a long time at the company without knowing what their job was there.

"In my opinion, that was one of the codes that characterized start-ups. Lots of people there didn't know exactly what the company did. You have a cute product that knows how to do great things. But you're not clear about what it's worth, or the laws of the marketplace, the limitations, whether the business is going to succeed or fail. Will we make money? Lose money? In the old economy, you knew: you have a product, if it sold - you made money; if it didn't sell - you didn't make money. Here, everything was murky."

But the bosses assured you the product would make it big - trust them.

"Until things started to fall apart, there was no problem, you ate up all their bullshit, you ate and enjoyed yourself. But as soon as you see people around you looking for work and not finding any, and the options are worthless, and the bosses are telling you that 'the situation's great, you're fired,' that's when the crisis begins. And then comes the crash, and instead of having a good time saying 'I'm in high-tech,' the people around you were having a good time when you said it."

+2)

Angry young men in black

A new generation of the ultra-Orthodox elite is marching to the beat of two drummers, keeping in step with both the Haredi and the secular worlds. The reporter meets three writers whose satire is making waves

By Avirama Golan Razor-sharp writers (from left): Yedidyah Meir, Kobi Arieli and Yair Hasdiel.

On a normal day, the journey between Bnei Brak and Tel Aviv takes 20 minutes by car. But during the "days of awe," the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, a vast gap yawns between the two towns, and there doesn't appear to be a bridge long enough to cross it. Residents of Bnei Brak and Tel Aviv don't seem troubled by this gulf. Viewed through secular lenses, the ultra-Orthodox, or Haredim, look like foreigners, decked out in the black uniforms of a European sect, swaying to strange rhythms in their yeshivas, hawking wares in their own separate markets and stores that evoke the humble shtetl world described by the wry Jewish writer Mendele Mocher Seforim (Shalom Jacob Abramowitz).

As the secular see it, the ultra-Orthodox speak broken Hebrew or Yiddish, avoid duty in the Israel Defense Forces, transfer millions of shekels to their dubious educational associations, milk the system without shame; and when Shabbat comes around, they hurl rocks at vehicles on Jerusalem's Bar-Ilan Street.

Conversely, in the Haredi view, secular Tel Aviv residents are idle worshipers of the coffee shop and the restaurant. They are heretics who eat vile, non-kosher food, prattle about nonsense, and raise children who become addicted to drugs and murder taxi drivers. They spend their nights glued to porno television channels - at least, when they're not too busy committing adultery or obtaining divorce agreements.

The secular find nothing objectionable about Haredim who provide wheelchairs to the physically disabled and retrieve mutilated body parts after terror attacks. That is, the secular are willing to concede that when it comes to acts of mercy, ultra-Orthodox Jews are amazing. For their part, the ultra-Orthodox acknowledge that the secular world is responsible for astounding inventions conjured up in university or high tech laboratories. Haredim have no problem acquiring sophisticated cell phone and computer equipment, welcoming the sophisticated communications gear as though it comes with a stamp of approval from the rabbinic courts.

In love with Zionism

In recent years, new cultural links between secular and ultra-Orthodox have been forged, yet neither side is eager to acknowledge that the connections have been made. Neither side really wants to shed its proud reputation for persistence and inflexibility; both sides stubbornly deny that there has, in fact, been change.

Whereas left-wing politicians continue to define the ultra-Orthodox parties as "anti-Zionist movements," most young Haredim are emotionally drawn by the "100 percent Israeli" dynamics of political power and military service. They are literally in love with the most conspicuous symbolic emblems of Zionism and the State of Israel. Though they might not wave the blue and white flag on Israel's Independence Day, they are happy to see the same standard flying above Israeli embassies in the cursed and wretched Diaspora. They might not enlist in the IDF in droves (though IDF Haredi programs, Nahal and Stage B, have picked up more momentum than the public sometimes realizes), but young Haredim idolize Mossad and Shin Bet security agents, and are in awe of IDF combat activity.

Non-mainstream Haredi newspapers (and sometimes Agudath Yisrael's well-established Hamodiya) publish reports that are buoyed by a nationalist tone of sorts. It would not be hard to imagine such reports being printed in (for instance) the secular Ma'ariv newspaper of the

1960s. Residents of Bnei Brak nowadays lament that their Tel Aviv counterparts have forgotten the meaning of Zionism, and that no Tel Avivian has paid attention to the fact that the ultra-Orthodox are the new Zionists. Mass Haredi enlistment for the rescue and casualty identification teams that appear on the scene of terror strikes typifies the ultra-Orthodox yearning to become part of the national consensus (particularly in the quasi-military sphere), and to create a new all-Jewish coalition to oppose the "Palestinians" (a loosely defined term that also embraces Israeli Arabs).

As early as 1997, former Shas leader Aryeh Deri, whose sociopolitical instincts are famous and well-honed, opined that "Shas members are the genuine Zionists." Since this remark, Deri's successors have proven that they are no less nationalistically committed and patriotic than their non-Orthodox peers in the government.

Despite these developments that occur close to, or in the heart of, the nation's political-military-media establishment, the most intriguing new link between the Haredi and secular worlds flourishes in a distinctively cultural sphere. It is a trend which must be described according to its own unique conceptual compass.

Small groups belonging to the Haredi elite - young people who studied in first-rate yeshivas, some of whom completed academic courses of study (including a few who studied law, business administration or computers in colleges) - have taken a new and complex path, a ground-breaking journey of personal identity that is best described in seemingly self-contradictory terms. These are young people firmly rooted in Haredi society, who also feel free to move in the general cultural world, a milieu over which secular people believe they have a monopoly.

Straddling both worlds in a seemingly impossible pose, these young men observe everything. Peering critically at both the secular and ultra-Orthodox worlds, their writing is bold and razor-sharp, humorously ironic and also deeply sorrowful.

The brazen young

Gradually, their viewpoints have started to trickle down into the public consciousness. This is a group of brazen young writers whose no-holds-barred style is bold not only in comparison to the Haredi press, but also holds its own when compared to the mainstream secular media, and even the local, city-wide newspapers. Some of their works are published on the Eppes ("something" in Yiddish) Internet portal, a site which group members operate and describe as a "non-politically correct portal on the margins of sanity in the State of Israel ..."

The head of the group, who is described as the "chief editor and interim president of the spiritual committee" (the appellation pokes fun at the "spiritual committees" that operate within Haredi newspapers, acting as internal censorship bureaus responsible for approving materials suitable for publication), is Yedidyah Meir, 25, a graduate of the Shalhevet yeshiva. He hosts the "Mah Yedidot" program (the name is borrowed from a traditional Shabbat eve song), which is broadcast on the Kol Hai radio station. Meir also has a column in the Haredi weekly Mishpaha ("Family").

Meir is the scion of a dynasty with impressive ultra-Orthodox and national-religious credentials. His paternal grandfather, a former Bank Hamizrahi director general, was a prominent member of the National Religious Party who ended up supporting Labor's Yitzhak Rabin. His mother hails from the famed Kook family (his uncle, Rabbi Simha Kook, was Rehovot's chief rabbi). Since coming into his own as a young religious thinker and publicist, Meir has tried to bridge two worlds, the "black" Haredi sphere, and the national-religious camp of the knitted skullcap. Meir's torn, two-sided outlook - which in recent years has been joined by a real thirst for culture, especially literature - ripples through every word he writes.

The so-called spiritual committee's "acting president" is Kobi Arieli, 29, a ninth generation Jerusalemite (his great-grandfather headed the Mercaz Harav yeshiva). Arieli is a graduate of the Hebron yeshiva, and also of the IDF's Stage B (shortened basic training) program. Arieli began his yeshiva studies as a "Purim Rabbi." (By custom, once a year, on Purim, yeshivas are run by one of their brightest students - usually a Torah prodigy with a keen ability to fetch a good, constructive laugh out of any situation.)

He subsequently wrote speeches for politicians (including secular figures such as Dan Meridor); and he was one of the founders of the Kol Hai radio station. Today he writes

periodically for Ma'ariv's op-ed page, and also has a satirical column in the Haredi newspaper Kehila.

Yair Hasdiel, a Gur Hasid, is a 32-year-old from Haifa whose family was active in the Agudath Yisrael workers party (Poalei Agudath Yisrael). He is a graduate of both Tel Aviv's New Yishuv (Hayishuv Hahadash) yeshiva and Bar-Ilan University's Faculty of Law. He also served as a teacher in the IDF.

As Hasdiel tells it, his term of army service is a long story. "I wanted to study," he recalls, "but they warned me in the yeshiva that if I went to a university they wouldn't arrange a shiduch [arranged marriage] for me. Serving in the army smoothed out university study a little." Today, Hasdiel serves in a combat unit as an IDF reserve.

Asked whether he had forfeited his eligibility for a shiduch when he went off to study law, Hasdiel provides a wry, evasive answer. "You can call it a shiduch," he says. "But it can also be called a very successful blind date." His wife is journalist Shalhevet Hasdiel.

For several years, Hasdiel wrote the main editorial for the Shas party's Yom Leyom newspaper. Today he earns his keep by working as a planning and construction adviser to the mayor of Bnei Brak. He is currently completing his first novel, and an anthology of his short stories is scheduled to be published by Keter. (Arieli is also due to publish a volume of fiction.) Occasionally Hasdiel writes side-splitting sketches for Eppes.

Uninhibited

Personal background is what separates the three from secular writers of their generation. They were born in Israel and raised by blue-blooded Israeli families deeply immersed in the country's affairs; all three radiate an almost elitist swagger, a refusal to fawn and kowtow to the secular world. Their writing is utterly bereft of the sense of inferiority characteristic of much Haredi discourse. Also impressive is their total command of both cultures, their fluency in all layers of the Hebrew language (both Israeli Hebrew and Jewish Hebrew, to use an interesting linguistic distinction proposed by some critics), and their uninhibited ability to tear any deserving social or cultural phenomenon to shreds.

They are not deterred by possible responses to their attacks and barbs, despite criticism from disturbed or angry ultra-Orthodox readers - as well as secular readers who don't quite know how to digest their odd prose, or are convinced that the savage attacks are being volleyed from a new, bona fide Jewish underground.

For their part, the three don't believe that they are true iconoclasts. As they see it, they've dared to voice criticism in a forum that is just a bit more public than the back row of a synagogue.

In terms of their political viewpoints, the three adopt traditional Haredi positions that are colored by a strong element of constructive civil consciousness. Pressured to expound on their political views, two (Arieli, from Kfar Chabad, and Hasdiel, from Bnei Brak) show leftist inclinations, whereas Meir (who lives with his parents near Beit Shemen) nods slightly toward the right.

Sharp-witted on all other subjects, the three grope for words when asked whether the persona of a New Haredi is genuine. Is there really a modern orthodoxy? Maybe, they say. Arieli insists that the first question to ask is "What is a Haredi?" Does the term connote membership in a particular social sector? Does it refer to religious observance and faith? (In fact, he responds to his own question, faith is a topic settled between the believer and his God, and relies upon very few external signs.) Is being Haredi a cultural matter?

"In Israel, there's a tendency to fuse these different levels," Arieli explains. "The spheres are easily confused because of the 'return to orthodoxy' [hazera b'tshuva] phenomenon, which is an Israeli process. Since we are a tribal society, the only thing one has to do in order to become Orthodox is to change tribes ... you mumble 'baruch hashem,' [God be blessed] and presto, without any delay, you've become religious. And if you are Haredi, like myself, but speak like 'one of the [secular] guys,' does it mean that you're not religious? We've become connected with secular culture because it really delivers the goods. I just don't take the whole package. I enjoy 10 percent of what my heretic friends indulge, I eat differently, and I have a relatively conservative cultural outlook."

Chortling, Arieli describes in lavish detail how friends of his went to extravagant lengths to round up kosher food for him once when he wasn't even hungry. The same friends, he

explains, once sent him out to buy non-kosher food for them - their strained, copious explication of Jewish law did little to quell his misgivings about such an unholy errand.

Meir tells what he regards as a yet more troubling story. Friends of his in an army camp bought him house slippers made out of synthetic fur, with the face of a fuzzy animal thrown in to boot. Meir was moved by the gesture, but he turned pale the moment he removed the gift's wrapping paper when he returned home. "My mother fainted," he recalls.

"The animal was, no kidding, what Jews were martyred for." The slippers were decorated by no ordinary pig - the blasphemy was wrought by Piglet, Winnie the Pooh's buddy. "I know that for you, this was just a present from Polgat. For me, it encapsulated all that is non-kosher," Meir explains.

Wider horizons

"Our writing clearly draws inspiration from sources of Jewish religion and faith," says Hasdiel. He has supplemented his work as an author of absurdity-tinged short stories and an ardent reader of avant-garde European literature by writing a short Haredi-Hebrew dictionary for secular Israelis who aren't versed in the colloquial terms of the ultra-Orthodox world. "For us," he says, "the exposure to world and [secular] Hebrew cultures adds another layer, enriching our work, adding to its complexity."

Hasdiel denies that his group views secular ignorance with condescending disdain. Perhaps, he admits on second thought, there is a small measure of condescension. After all, he says, "We feel that we have wider cultural horizons, and that our ability to integrate two worlds adds perspective." In any event, he elaborates, "I am convinced that it is usually much harder to hold your ground at the crossroads where people like myself are standing. It enriches, enhances - but it's hard."

"What is really meant by 'secular culture,'" Hasdiel pointedly inquires. "Sartre belongs to you, or to us? Classical music is yours, or ours? Tel Aviv's luxuries and spoils - well I can live happily without [them]."

The torment of a Maccabi Tel Aviv fan

The flip side of this skeptical, sometimes haughty, take on the secular world is an acutely critical view of the Haredi society in which they live. Cautiously, as though walking a tightrope, they choose words to articulate their positions in this regard - though part of the criticism has already been expressed in their published stories and columns (often directed at a small, closed circle of readers).

The three adamantly reject any secular attempt to paint the ultra-Orthodox world in idyllic colors. As they see it, such idealization is an annoying reversal of negative stereotypes of the Haredim. On the one hand, secular Israelis sneer at stories of Haredi couples relying on holes in bedsheets; on the other hand, there are idealized depictions of the warm Haredi family atmosphere, of mutual aid and the constructive wile of matchmakers.

Exemplifying the group's realistic perceptions of its surroundings, Hasdiel turns a critical eye on the subject of arranged marriages. "The shiduch system works wonderfully with the Haredim not because it's such a great method in and of itself. It suits Haredi society, where divorce is out of the question, and where the family is the rock-solid element upon which the society is built."

"Secular Israelis want to put us, the Haredim, in boxes," Arieli says. Haredim "are supposed to behave as secular people think they must behave. They should heed Jewish commandments, and be totally pious. And if I appear to show too much interest in theater and in literature - well, that must mean that I'm not a good enough Haredi. That I've left the framework."

Throughout the discussion, the three equivocate constantly about terms and formulations. Their caution is prompted not only by tough, vexing questions. This is one of the first times they've sat down together to ponder the meaning of their work and their evolving identities; and they don't appear to be true friends. For instance, Meir pointedly teases and jabs at Arieli throughout the conversation for not being sufficiently religious.

Immersed deeply in his life in Bnei Brak and in his literary work, Hasdiel is wary of being branded a satiric humorist - even though he clearly clowns in some of his newspaper sketches. In fact, a reader of his brilliant piece in which he bemoans the torture inflicted on a religious Maccabi Tel Aviv fan who is denied knowledge of the result of a key match because of the start

of the Sabbath would be hard-pressed not to regard Hasdiel as a humorist. The article, entitled "What's the Score?", takes cutting swipes at secular and Haredim alike, and also at the writer himself; it was roundly criticized by some Orthodox readers for what appears to be an overly avid interest in sports.

The ultra-Orthodox dismiss sports as a particularly loathsome, contemptible pursuit. Ruminating about this perception in one of his short stories, Arieli described the Haredi's body as a mere trifling attachment to the head. This negative view of the body and of sports is a lingering vestige of the traditional Haredi mentality, which all three young writers wrestle with in their own fashion, unable to pin it down and defeat it in normative terms.

"The definition of New Haredim," reflects Yedidya Meir, "has an internal contradiction. The ideal has been, and remains, yeshiva study. All the rest is nonsense. When you leave the yeshiva to enter the real world, there's an identity issue. Who are you? Clearly, you're not secular; but you're also not a regular Haredi, because you've been in the army, and you're no longer in the yeshiva. So what are you?"

Somewhere beyond the horizon

The IDF opposed the development; conflicts within the security industries delayed the work; two failed launches almost brought an end to the project. But, as Ha'aretz reports, the Israel Space Agency managed to develop its spy satellite

By Amnon Barzilai Launch of the Ofeq in September 1988: Israel joins an exclusive club.

"We will establish the Israeli space agency and have Prof. Yuval Neeman head it," was the decision that was made during the course of a closed meeting at the end of 1982. The principal decision makers, or individuals who were made privy to the secret, included then prime minister Menachem Begin, then defense minister Ariel Sharon and the former director-general of the Defense Ministry, Brigadier General (res.) Aharon Beit Halahmi. The principal, underlying purpose of the creation of the agency was to provide a framework within which to pursue the program to develop the Ofeq satellite and the Shavit satellite launcher.

Prof. Neeman, the head of the Tehiya (Revival) movement and a member of the Knesset at the time, was also involved in the decision. In his capacity as minister of science and, above all, as a world-renowned physicist, Neeman was well aware of the significance of the program. He, therefore, agreed to act as the chairman of the board of the agency. "It was a move that proved itself over the years," says one of the researchers who has been involved in the space project since the 1980s.

The brain behind the program was Prof. Haim Eshed, from the Asher Space Research Center at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology, in Haifa. Reports abroad have named Eshed as the director of the space agency's projects and he is considered the father of the Israeli space program.

Israel made its breakthrough into space exactly 13 years ago, on September 19, 1988, joining the exclusive club of seven other countries with satellite-launching capability. The operation was a project of the Israel Space Agency and the initials ISA (in their Hebrew equivalent) appeared on the launcher. The Ofeq 1 imaging satellite, which was borne aloft by a Shavit launcher, rocketed into space and began to orbit the Earth. The project had the support and blessing of the defense establishment.

But today, the Ofeq ("horizon" in Hebrew) directorate at the Defense Ministry is planning the launch of the future imaging satellites. If all goes well, Ofeq 5 will be launched into space in a few months, and will replace Ofeq 3, which is no longer functioning. The new satellite is intended to extend Israel's strategic early-warning capabilities and to reduce its dependence on the photography services of civilian satellites that are operated by commercial firms - one Israeli and the other foreign-based.

The first obstacle

In mid-1979, it was Israel's limited, strategic early-warning depth that led the head of Military Intelligence at the time, Major General Yehoshua Saguy, to request a meeting with then defense minister Ezer Weizman and the chief of staff at the time, Rafael Eitan. Saguy told the country's two top defense figures that the peace treaty Israel had signed with Egypt on March 29, 1979, had created a problem for Military Intelligence. "I assume that we will need early-warning capabilities even in peacetime," he said. "However, you don't send war planes with

cameras on reconnaissance missions over countries with which we have signed a peace treaty."

The only solution, Saguy said, was a photography satellite. Israel would thus be able to bypass the political obstacle and take pictures over all countries, without generating diplomatic and other problems. Weizman and Eitan were not enthusiastic. "Have you done a feasibility study?" Weizman asked. Saguy replied that he had not. For a while, the initiative seemed to have died - as it had done so in the past.

The frequency of reconnaissance flights over Egypt and Syria had declined since the War of Attrition at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The SA-2 and SA-3 missile batteries that the Soviet Union had supplied deterred the Israel Air Force from flying deep into Egyptian and Syrian territory. The concern for the safety of the pilots and the aircraft provided the major push toward the development of unmanned drones. However, the situation was aggravated after the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

In the wake of the separation-of-forces talks with Egypt and Syria, as part of the interim agreements, new instructions were laid down concerning aerial photography policy. Every reconnaissance flight over Syria and Egypt now required the authorization of the prime minister. The new stipulation was introduced by Yitzhak Rabin, during his first term of office as prime minister (1974-1977). The reason for the new directive was primarily political: The government did not want a diplomatic row over reconnaissance flights to become a pretext for the Arab side to break off the talks. Rabin's instruction became the custom and remained in force after the Likud took power in May 1977.

The director of Military Intelligence who preceded Saguy, Major General Shlomo Gazit, consulted Prof. Yuval Neeman about the problem. In the mid-1970s, Neeman, a former deputy director of Military Intelligence, served as a special adviser to then defense minister Shimon Peres. Neeman: "Rabin's order created a situation in which air force planes had to make do with diagonal photographs, which are not as good."

In January 1976, Neeman prepared an unpleasant surprise for Rabin. At the time, Rabin was visiting the United States as the guest of the U.S. Congress and he described what happened in his autobiography. The late prime minister was pressed hard by embarrassing questions concerning the arms procurement request that Israel had submitted to the United States, as well as the question of why Israel needed a satellite system costing a billion dollars.

"I had no answer apart from the one that was both serious and overt: We don't need a system like that. And that was my frank reply," Rabin wrote, adding that the defense package Israel had requested from the United States had also included other off-the-wall items that had been "the product of Prof. Yuval Neeman's imagination."

Gazit: "I was the one who submitted the request to purchase satellites from the United States to Yuval because the air force was refraining from photographing enemy areas, with the exception of Lebanon. But we did only superficial work: Beyond making the request, we did nothing."

Some four years later, Saguy delved into the subject more deeply. At the time, Military Intelligence had a huge budget of around \$500 million, out of which \$5 million had been earmarked for a feasibility study on the production of satellite launchers, satellites and telescopic cameras by Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), the Arms Development Authority (Rafael) and El-Op Electro-Optic Industries. The three units were asked to complete the study within ten months. In the meantime, Saguy appointed a project head to lead the satellite project in Military Intelligence. With Saguy's authorization, a meeting was set up between the project head and then defense minister Ezer Weizman. Years later, the head of the project would say that Weizman had been the first obstacle, but that he had also given the satellite project a chance. Seeking a second opinion, Weizman asked the project head to present his program to Colonel (res.) Emanuel Pratt, who built the nuclear reactor at Dimona. Pratt gave his blessing.

Ambition steps in

Another station along the way was a meeting with Dov Raviv, the director of Malam, a systems engineering unit in IAI. By the end of the 1970s, though, Raviv had already made a name for himself within the defense establishment: In 1966, for example, The New York Times reported that Israel had signed a secret agreement with France to acquire an intermediate-range

surface-to-surface missile. Then, in 1989, a year after the launch of Ofeq 1, the London-based Institute for Strategic Studies reported that the Shavit missile launcher was the platform for Israel's Jericho surface-to-surface missile. A few years later, in 1996, Dassault, the French aerospace company, exposed the story of the two-stage Jericho missile it had developed for Israel, based on an agreement signed in 1963. According to foreign reports, which appeared about a year after France had clamped an embargo on the sale of arms to Israel, the development and manufacturing of the missile was assigned to Malam.

Raviv was asked whether his plant was capable of developing and manufacturing a rocket launcher. Another question was whether Malam could also manufacture a satellite capable of transmitting photographs with a resolution that would facilitate the identification of any object larger than three meters. Raviv said that the launch capability of the rocket would enable a satellite weighing 250 kilograms to be lifted into space and then circle the earth in a low orbit.

Thus began the collaboration, which would continue for some 10 years. Raviv felt that he held all the cards, as there was no way to talk about a satellite without a rocket to launch it; and there was no way that another country or a private organization would agree to launch an Israeli spy satellite.

The ambitious Raviv wanted Malam to become Israel's missile and satellite firm. The management of IAI, however, had other ideas. For them, the results of the feasibility study commissioned by Military Intelligence arrived at an opportune moment. The revolution fomented by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and the fall of the Shah in February 1979 had put an end to the cooperation between Israel and Iran on the development of advanced weapons systems. One of the victims of this turn of events was IAI's MBT plant in the city of Yehud, outside Tel Aviv. At the beginning of 1980, the head of the plant's unit for developing sea-to-sea missiles, Dr. Moshe Barlev, whose team had been left without work in the wake of the revolution in Iran, was asked to conduct a feasibility study on the building of satellites. His deputy was Dr. Patrick Rosenbaum, head of the missile control and guided bombs unit.

The rumor of a fascinating new secret project spread like wildfire through MBT and the team was soon set up. Barlev: "None of us knew anything about space. Each member of the group had to learn the subject for himself, from books and periodicals on things like materials in space, the mechanics of space orbits, heat transference in space and so forth." However, Raviv didn't take this development lying down. He asked Gabi Birin, a physicist at Malam, to set up a team of engineers who would draw up a preliminary plan for a imaging satellite.

While all this was going on, a group of scientists at Rafael was working on the feasibility study. No one imagined that a quarrel over the implementation of the Ofeq project, involving the development of a satellite and a launcher, would delay the program and postpone the first launch for three years.

American concerns

Saguy, who was head of Military Intelligence when the spy satellite project was set in motion, was the only head who came up through the ranks of the Intelligence branch; hence, his special attitude toward aerial photographs. His approach was: "What you see with the eye is the best information."

The visual picture has a clear-cut advantage over other methods of intelligence gathering. In contrast to tapping telephone lines, which can be scrambled, or listening in to electronic signals, which are open to deception, there are no ways to distort what the lens of the camera picks up. An experienced reader of photographs can distinguish between a genuine weapons system and a dummy. The major limitation of a photograph is that it cannot attest to the enemy's intention.

The operational request made to the IAI and Rafael in connection with the satellite project stemmed from the needs of Military Intelligence, which demanded the ability to photograph objects measuring 1.5 meters in size. At such a level of separation, it's possible to distinguish between a truck and a tank. The prevailing view at Military Intelligence was that in light of the financial constraints, which would dictate the size of the launcher, it would be possible to come up with a small satellite weighing no more than 80 kilograms. The target date for the first launch of the satellite was 1986.

In an interview to the Washington Post (May 19, 1984), Saguy, who maintained close ties with the director of the Central Intelligence Agency at the time, William Casey, related that in one

of their meetings, he had been brash enough to ask for help in the form of the Americans' satellite photographs. The Americans had developed a huge satellite (HK-11), equipped with one-ton cameras, which transmitted photographs with a resolution of 20 centimeters. However, Saguy's good relations with Casey were not enough and the CIA director balked. He explained that the satellite photographs taken by the United States were a national resource not to be shared with any other country.

On June 7, 1981, Israel bombed and destroyed Iraq's Osirac nuclear reactor. The United States provided no assistance for the mission, and the Israel Air Force had to come up with aerial photographs of the reactor from another source. However, a crack later emerged in the wall of the U.S. opposition, and Washington subsequently agreed to come through with photographs of the reactor from their store of shots taken from space. The Israelis who viewed the photographs were overwhelmed by their quality. Then came the disappointment. The American attitude, together with the lessons that were learned from the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear installation, reinforced the view of Military Intelligence that it would be wrong to rely on the Americans and that it was, therefore, essential to continue with the project of developing the satellite and the launcher.

The foreign client

In May 1980, Ezer Weizman resigned as defense minister; thereupon, then prime minister Menachem Begin assumed the defense portfolio and held it until the elections of July 1981. At the end of 1980, following the completion of the preliminary stage of the feasibility study, Saguy asked Begin for the go-ahead to proceed to the next phase of the project. The financial problem now arose for the first time. The cost of the project was estimated at around \$250 million. "But you know what a first estimate means - it's obvious that you have to multiply it by four. So we were talking about a project that would cost about \$1 billion," says a source who was involved in the decision-making process.

Begin convened a meeting for a comprehensive discussion on the budget for space enterprise. IAI found a "foreign client" that was prepared to participate in the funding of the project; and in such a manner, managed to submit an offer that was much cheaper than the one submitted by Rafael. The agreement reached with the foreign client allowed for a more generous budget to build a larger launcher. The arrangement meant that the project could be financed from outside the defense budget.

The secret agreement held fast throughout the development of the satellite project. On July 14, 1994, then defense minister of South Africa, Joe Modise, revealed details of the collaboration that had taken place between Israel and South Africa on the development of missile technology. The security ties between the two countries began in the early 1970s and intensified through the following decade, with South Africa replacing Iran as the major client of Israeli weapons systems. Toward the end of the 1980s, Israel had some \$2.3 billion worth of signed contracts with the South African Defense Ministry.

Rafael victorious over IAI

The appointment of Ariel Sharon as defense minister following the 1981 elections meant that the satellite project required renewed authorization. Sharon, like his predecessors, Begin and Weizman (despite initial misgivings), supported the project. Sharon, though, implemented a reform in the structure of Research and Development (R&D) unit of the defense establishment, choosing to add to it the administrations of projects that had hitherto operated autonomously. The head of R&D, Aharon Beit Halahmi, was named director-general of the Defense Ministry, while the director-general of Rafael, Dr. Ben Zion Naveh, was appointed to head the Arms and Technological Infrastructures Development Administration. The personnel shake-up in the Defense Ministry would have implications for the competition between Rafael and IAI over which agency would take the lead in the satellite project.

The management of IAI decided that its MBT division, under the team led by Moshe Barlev, would lead the development of the satellite. At the beginning of 1982, a recommendation entitled "Ofeq Program" was submitted for developing an observation satellite. The program included timetables and preplanning for a ground station, and laid out budget estimates and personnel requirements. The team also built a model of the satellite. The recommendation was to develop the satellite independently, without relying on foreign know-how, so as to avoid having to rely on foreign sources and to enable flexibility and creativity.

IAI was bitterly disappointed, however, when Beit Halahmi and Naveh decided that Rafael would serve as the chief contractor for the development of the satellite. The launcher would be developed by Malam. The two large engines of the Shavit rocket would be built at Israel Military Industry (IMI)'s Givon plant, while a third engine would be developed by Rafael. At the same time, the Defense Ministry presented one condition to Rafael: The IAI's MBT division would be subcontractor on the project. This condition would turn out to be highly problematic for Rafael.

Barak versus the satellite

Following Ariel Sharon's resignation as defense minister, in February 1983 (in the wake of the conclusions of the Kahan Commission of Inquiry, which investigated the massacres in the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps half a year earlier during the Lebanon War), Moshe Arens took over the defense portfolio. Once again, the project was shaken up. Not because of Arens, though - there was no need to convince him of the importance of developing an observation satellite. As the former chief engineer of IAI, Arens viewed the satellite and launcher project as a national mission. This time, the problem lay with the director of Military Intelligence.

Saguy stepped down from the post in August 1983, after four-and-a-half years on the job. To replace him, Arens appointed one of the most promising officers in the Israel Defense Forces, Major General Ehud Barak. Barak disputed the importance of the project, arguing that Military Intelligence and the IDF had no need for imaging satellites. The photographs taken by the air force were sufficient, he said, even if they were taken from Israeli air space at an angle.

Arens: "The moment Ehud said they didn't need it, there was no IDF budget with which to continue the work. That was a syndrome in the IDF. The senior commanders were afraid of development budgets. They thought the main loser would be the army. They didn't understand that we were out to create a force multiplier for the IDF that would provide the kind of superiority and qualitative advantage that is possible only if development is carried out in Israel."

Still, the satellite was supposed to supply strategic early-warning capabilities and Military Intelligence was supposed to submit the operational request. Because Barak was against the project, there was no operational request from the IDF. The entire project appeared to be doomed.

They love to hate her

On the morning she was released from prison, demonstrators greeted her with cries of 'Murderer!' The intensity of the emotions Margalit Har-Shefi provokes reveals much about the relations between different sectors of Israeli society.

By Yair Sheleg Margalit Har-Shefi. Author A.B. Yehoshua is convinced that the fact that Har-Shafi is a woman had an effect on the way she was treated.

(Photo: Pavel Wohlberg)

Friday, August 1, 2001. The morning after the deadly terror attack on the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem. The news programs presented heart-rending interviews with the wounded and the witnesses to the bombing, alongside the sagacious commentary of security pundits. However, despite the intense coverage of the bombing and its implications, air time was also devoted to providing continual updates from the Neve Tirza prison. That morning, Margalit Har-Shefi was released from prison after serving two-thirds of the nine-month term to which she had been sentenced.

Har-Shefi, a classmate of Yigal Amir, the man who assassinated prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, was convicted of not preventing a crime. Judges in three courts found that she could have known about Amir's plans to kill Rabin from comments he made to her on the subject, and that she should have informed the authorities. With a single "telephone call that she did not make," as Supreme Court Justice Mishael Heshin put it, Har-Shefi shared part of the responsibility.

That terrible summer morning, a group of demonstrators gathered outside the Neve Tirza women's prison and greeted Har-Shefi with cries of "Murderer!" The small demonstration was not the only time hostility was directed at Har-Shefi. A few weeks earlier, President Moshe Katzav's decision to reduce her sentence by a third (contrary to the decision by the prison parole board), the common practice with all well-behaved prisoners, caused a public uproar.

Supporters and opponents of the decision both spoke out emphatically. Even the president himself was suspected of being influenced by political considerations in his decision.

The media monitored Har-Shefi's movements with great intensity, even greater than for people convicted of direct involvement in the Rabin assassination, such as Dror Adani and Ohad Sekornik. Har-Shefi's parents, Dov and Bitha, say that she has received very little hate mail. One such letter said, "You need to understand: The peripheral point - whether she really knew about the assassination or not - is not at all relevant to the malignant tumor that you have raised in your criminal settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. You are the tumor and we will be happy to do without the bad organs, which endanger our eternal existence."

She received, on the other hand, many letters of support: Rightist supporters fought for Har-Shefi and against her conviction with an intensity no less strong than that reflected in the hate mail.

A victim of society?

What is it about Har-Shefi that elicits such powerful emotions? Is it her refusal to stand during the moment of silence in honor of Rabin's memory on the day of his funeral? Or is it the fact that she was the only settler among all those close to Amir who makes it so much easier to hate her? What does the intensity of emotion directed toward Har-Shefi say about the relations between the different camps in Israeli society?

Avraham Sharon, a poet and member of Hashomer Hatzair-affiliated Kibbutz Reshafim, sees himself as an out-and-out leftist. Nonetheless, as Har-Shefi's release from prison grew closer, he wrote a moving and compassionate article supporting her in the rightist Makor Rishon weekly.

Sharon wrote: "You are going free, Margalit ... You, and only you know that you have nothing to regret because you are not guilty. You know, dear girl, that you were a victim, a scapegoat, who paid an exorbitant, unreasonable price - for a thought, although it was never even proved; for an intention, although it was never diagnosed or identified ... I want to tell you, Margalit, that although this land is full of hate, there are other islands of warmth and compassion, of beauty and love."

Sharon maintained that the hatred toward Har-Shefi was a displaced and projected anger for Yigal Amir: "Into you, the left drains, like a diseased abscess, all the fury and helplessness that it feels - and very rightly so! - toward the murderer rotting in his cell ... You, a friend of the murderer, symbolizes for many, in a very real and tangible symbiotic manner, the hatred and loathing he awakens."

In this spirit, Sharon says, today, "The members of my camp simply projected on her the excess justified hatred they have for Amir. He, after all, has already been judged, condemned and banished. She is still living among us, so we projected our feelings toward him on her."

Har-Shefi's father, on the other hand, believes that the hatred for Margalit is related primarily to the fact that she lives in a settlement: "In the story the left wove, Rabin's assassination was supposed to have been perpetrated by a settler. Unfortunately, the facts don't quite fit this thesis. So they set up as victim the only settler that had any contact with Amir."

Prof. Aharon Ben-Ze'ev also views Har-Shefi's identity as a settler as a major component of the hatred toward her. Ben-Ze'ev, the rector of the University of Haifa and a philosopher, is considered a world authority on the philosophy of emotions.

"Har-Shefi is not just a settler, but a member of the settler 'aristocracy,' the daughter of a prominent settler family," he says. "That is certainly a component of the intensity of emotion directed at her."

Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun has been known for the past 20 years as someone who is not afraid to criticize his friends from Gush Emunim from within, and who has attacked their political extremism. His stand was especially striking after the Rabin assassination, when he did not hesitate to assail the Judea, Samaria and Gaza rabbinical establishment with the claim that at least some of them shared responsibility for the atmosphere that paved the way for the assassination.

Bin-Nun attributes the hatred for Har-Shefi to the public's frustration that the "ones really responsible" evaded punishment.

"From the outset, I have been convinced that Har-Shefi is a victim of a society that wanted with all its heart and soul to find people whom they could blame for this awful crime," claims

Bin-Nun. "Because society did not succeed in apprehending the people who really make the decision and have the influence, because the really big fish got away, they imputed her. That is why I view her imprisonment as a very cruel thing."

Among the many components of Har-Shefi's personality - being the daughter of a family belonging to the settler "aristocracy," friend of Yigal Amir - it would appear that the fact that she is a woman contributed to the intensity of feeling toward her. Is this related to the atavistic image of woman as a temptress who would cause men to commit forbidden deeds? Would a man suspected of similar responsibility as Har-Shefi have been treated similarly?

Author A.B. Yehoshua is convinced that the fact that Har-Shefi is a woman had an effect on the way she was treated: "It is only natural that behind this affair, there is a woman, and the young man was perceived as having committed the act for her, to impress her, giving the whole affair a very juicy erotic aspect. That also intensified the desire to punish her, as one who was part of his libido."

Ben-Ze'ev agrees that there is a connection between the fact of Har-Shefi being a woman and the depth of the hatred for her - but from the opposite direction. In his view, the negative feelings for her are generated not because she did what one expects a woman to do, but precisely because she behaved contrary to the feminine image.

"The treatment of Har-Shefi is not personal. On a personal level, I would say that she is perceived as a 'good girl,' a positive figure. The treatment of her stems from the fact that she is representative of a camp. As a representative, the fact that even a good-looking girl like her, an innocent lamb as it were, got to the point of what is thought of as collaboration with Amir is indicative, in the eyes of the left, of the intensity of the immorality of the settler camp."

The Har-Shefi affair gave expression to one of the typical characteristics of Israeli discourse: the tendency to take sides along political boundary lines. Seemingly, there would not have to be a necessary connection between the question of Har-Shefi's guilt and a person's views on issues related to borders and the peace process. A right-winger could believe that Har-Shefi bears responsibility, albeit passive, for not preventing Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, while a left-winger could believe that she does not bear any such responsibility and that she has been turned into a victim of circumstances. However, as is our wont here in Israel, almost all those who expressed their views fulfilled their expected roles in accordance with their political leanings.

Two exceptions to this rule, notes father Dov Har-Shefi, were two former Shin Bet (security service) chiefs Carmi Gillon and Ami Ayalon: "It is intriguing that they of all people, who have more intimate knowledge than anyone else of the circumstances surrounding the investigation and who are both identified politically with the left, saw fit to publicly state that in their view there was no justification for putting Margalit on trial and certainly not for convicting her."

Symbolic and theoretical sides

Aside from Gillon and Ayalon, Har-Shefi cannot recall any other left-winger that believed in his daughter's innocence. At least not publicly, comments his wife, Bitha. "Personally, I heard comments from people identified with leftist views who believed that Margalit had been treated unjustly," she says. "Unfortunately, they did not dare make their views public because it runs counter to what it is considered acceptable in their social milieu."

At the same time, the Har-Shefis admit that among their settler friends, they are unable to find hardly any voices that supported Margalit's conviction. Some claim that the very congruity between the feelings toward Har-Shefi's conviction and the political views of the interlocutors proves that her trial was contaminated by politicization. This view is held by Sarah Eliash, an educator and principal of the girls high school in Kedumim.

"No similar division exists when relating to Yigal Amir's guilt, about which there is an almost total 'wall-to-wall' consensus. The fact that the dispute over Har-Shefi's guilt corresponds with political positions only proves that her trial was really a political one," says Eliash.

A.B. Yehoshua does not agree. In his view, the congruity between political views and opinions concerning Har-Shefi's individual case indeed reflects the prevailing situation in Israel, in which discourse deviates from the matter under discussion. But in his opinion, it is the result of the critical importance of the questions raised in the Israeli political discourse.

"In my camp, there is enormous anger at the settlers and a prevailing feeling that they made it impossible to determine a border between us and the Palestinians," explains Yehoshua. "This

anger translates into a political discourse that goes beyond the matter at hand. Personally, I regret this. To me, it is not a healthy situation. On the Har-Shefi matter, I thought that it was indeed bizarre that she was being held responsible. But I put my trust in the justice system, just as I trusted the president when he decided to cut her sentence by a third. Nonetheless, I asked myself why it was so important to him to become involved in this case in particular."

If Har-Shefi's trial is seen as being analogous to Israeli society, it would be interesting to examine not only what society's treatment of her symbolizes but also what the behavior of the affair's protagonist symbolizes in the period immediately following the Rabin assassination. What - if anything - does the fact that she "did not pick up the phone" to report Amir's plans symbolize?

Sarah Eliash can help answer this question. A few months before the assassination, a number of Eliash's students participated in a weekend "solidarity visit" to a settlement. Yigal Amir and his good friend, Avishai Raviv, also took part. They heard Raviv, who later turned out to be an undercover Shin Bet agent, goad Amir to assassinate Rabin. Some of them even testified to that fact at the national commission of inquiry set up to examine the circumstances of the assassination. Despite this, they did not file complaints with the police or even tell their parents or teachers what they heard. Does this mean that they agreed with what was said?

"That is a difficult question," admits Eliash. "I only learned about what they had heard on the night of the assassination, when the girls came over to my home and told me. They saw Yigal Amir on television and immediately said that if he was the assassin, then Avishai Raviv was also guilty of murder. I also asked myself how it was that they said nothing before. After all, if they had heard someone they knew exhorting someone else to sell drugs, they would certainly have reported it just as they would have reported any other irregular criminal activity.

"Is it possible that they did not view the intention to kill Rabin as something irregular? I have the impression that during that period, among the part of the public that I belong to, talk about killing Rabin or the hope that he would die was not viewed as something unusual. Nonetheless, they did tell me that they were disgusted by what they heard and after that, kept their distance from the Yigal Amir-Avishai Raviv crowd. Besides that, it is completely clear to me that not a single one of the girls present believed for even a moment that they really meant the things they said about killing. If they had believed them, they would very likely have reported it."

What is hatred?

While Har-Shefi did not go to the police to complain about Amir, she did go to Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, one of the most prominent rabbis in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and the rabbi of Beit El, where she lives. She told Aviner that Amir was claiming that the law of *din rodef* [the law that applies to people who are pursuing another person or other people to kill them and whom, therefore, may themselves be killed, according to Jewish law], and wanted Rabbi Aviner to tell her what she should respond to Amir. Does this mean that she, in fact, took his words seriously?

Dov Har-Shefi says that Margalit took Amir seriously only on the fundamental, theological level but not at all on the practical level: "[Amir's] 'theological' talk about Rabin as a *rodef* disturbed her. But because she, unlike Amir, who had studied at yeshivas, did not have any Talmudic background, she approached Rabbi Aviner so that he would provide her with counter arguments. This does not mean that she took his threats to actually kill Rabin seriously."

Moreover, according to Dov Har-Shefi, talk about Rabin and the *din rodef* was quite prevalent among religious Zionist circles at the time. He says that Aviner himself testified at Har-Shefi's trial that he had been approached by other people concerning the application of this "law" to Rabin.

What is hate? Prof. Ben-Ze'ev tries to define it: "Hatred is a generally negative evaluation of another person. The essential difference between hatred and anger is that with anger, you get angry at a specific action by another person, while with hatred, you see everything about them as negative. Even if you are aware of the fact that the person has positive qualities, the bottom line as far as you are concerned is that they are negative."

The emotion of hatred, adds Ben-Ze'ev, becomes intensified the closer people are to each other: "The reason is not necessarily the closeness itself, but that it is harder to be separated

from people who are close. That creates a feeling that a person is trapped with the hated person, which further strengthens the intensity of the emotions. That is the reason hatred between spouses is the worst and most intense hatred there is, at least as long as people feel that they are stuck with each other.

"That is the reason that a football 'derby' - a football game between two teams from the same city - elicits such intense emotions. After all, involved are teams that are close to one another. That is why we hate the Palestinians more than we hate others that can perhaps harm us no less."

Ben-Ze'ev analyses the intensity of feeling toward Har-Shefi in the same spirit: "She is hated particularly because she is so close to left-wing secular people. She is a Zionist, as they are; the members of her camp serve in the army. She looks like a modern, young Israeli woman. If she were ultra-Orthodox, I think that she would be hated less because her behavior could be attributed to a different background and education.

"The fact that the ultra-Orthodox themselves are hated more in recent years can be attributed to the fact that they are growing increasingly closer to general Israeli society. When they were remote, they didn't elicit such intense emotions. By the same token, the emotion of hatred toward Har-Shefi is all the greater the more she cannot be seen as someone who is beyond the pale. It is precisely because she is our own flesh and blood."

MEMOIR / THE JOURNEY THAT BEGAN WITH A SHELL

By Amia Lieblich Haaretz 12 11 2010

Yoram Eshet-Alkalai suffered a critical head injury in the Yom Kippur War, 37 years ago. Only now is he publishing the story of his exceptional recovery, thus giving expression to other war victims whose disabilities often pass unnoticed.

How do you write a story of heroism in this generation, when heroism has become obsolete? Perhaps, of all things, by way of a journey to weakness? How many invisible war victims are living among us, and who are they? Why does a coherent narrative have a tremendous power to heal? These three questions are intertwined like a braid, with each becoming more or less relevant as "A Man Walks Home" progresses.

Yoram Eshet-Alkalai is both hero and antihero in this autobiography. Of his war experiences in the Yom Kippur War, 37 years ago, the moments he recalls are ones in which he was an observer on the sidelines, a soldier whose rifle was useless in the situation in which he found himself. He observes the reckless war heroes, is witness to their groundless and deceptive confidence, and at the same time is aware of his fears. In retrospect, he recalls the crossing of the Suez Canal as a frightening but "magical" trip in a bizarre world; yet he also sees it as a series of almost clumsy acts, in which his unsuccessful unit was dubbed in the media as "an Israeli commando force in the Egyptian rear."

But within this bizarre world, even before a shell hits his brain and changes his life forever, he undergoes a great moment of insight that he calls "the moment of truth of my life" - the knowledge that he is not a hero, as his family and friends on the kibbutz thought, but is dying to live, and prefers anything to destruction or a hero's death.

And then, on the edge of the trench that young Yoram had just dug, the shell hit him and he lost consciousness. Only later did he find out that he had sustained a direct hit, that his skull was split like an eggshell and pieces of his brain had scattered on the ground, that his hand was crushed by a piece of shrapnel, that another large piece had become stuck in his lung. How simple it would have been to die then, he writes from the distance of decades, not to undergo the journey that the shell began and that continues to this day.

Lessons of war

Eshet-Alkalai's story of heroism is not a war story, but a story of rehabilitation. It is accompanied by secondary stories of heroism: how he internalized the lessons of the war; how he faced his most painful memories and delusions; how he has functioned since then as a whole, giving and creative person; how he found his way back to his son, who was 2 years old when his father was called up to the reserves, wounded and suddenly transformed. This heroism is the story of a brain-damaged man who teaches himself to read, write, do math and remember who he is. And it is the story of the heroism of a first-year student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, in 1974, who has just learned to write with his right hand - since his

left hand, with which he has written until now, is paralyzed - and who tries to write down the words of the archaeology lecturer, but doesn't remember and doesn't understand and doesn't have enough time.

The author calculates that it would take him 12 hours to copy over a classmate's notes from a one-hour lecture. Today he is not only a university graduate but a full professor of technological education at the Open University, with a doctorate in geology. The heroism seen in him is his total dedication to rehabilitation and to a return to living a worthwhile life. But like the antihero he is, he does not deny that he has paid, and is still paying, a high price for the endless work this entails.

Always on alert

Yoram Eshet-Alkalai is not alone. But how many invisible war victims are living among us, and who are they? Israeli society is full of victims. That may even be the country's main psychological characteristic, one that, to my great regret, dictates a large part of its policy. We immediately think of the surviving Holocaust victims living among us, but they are gradually disappearing. There are other victims too: the second and third generations that grew up in their shadow, and the victims of the process of immigration and absorption, whose stories erupt here and there in literature, theater and the cinema. There are also, of course, many victims of war and terror. Eshet-Alkalai's book adds nuance to that category by opening our eyes to the stories of the victims whose disability cannot readily be seen. Like various psychological victims, and as opposed to amputees - who have not had an easy time either, needless to say - the writer of this book today looks whole, just like anyone else. A careful look reveals a slight limp, a certain clumsiness in his hand movements and a slight asymmetry in the structure of his skull, but that's not what is seen by the people he encounters casually, like those who travel with him on the buses he must use because he is unable to drive a car.

"My life as a disabled person," writes Eshet-Alkalai, "is a worldly life that requires me to be alert and very practical all the time and to deal with innumerable technical problems that pose almost no problem for ordinary people. With eyes that lack peripheral vision, with a hand and foot that move heavily and have lost any sense of touch, and in the constant state of disorientation, lack of concentration and being at my wit's end, simple tasks become a truly complicated operation. For example... taking out the fare and putting it in the bus driver's hand without having it fall on the floor... Understanding what I was asked at the end of the lecture."

I know of dozens of such people, each of them a war victim in his own way. Their stories go unheard, and perhaps they are not even aware that there is a point to telling their tales. This book gives voice to many of them.

'A world destroyed'

Family members often play a very significant role in the lives and rehabilitation of these unseen victims. With honesty, delicacy and wonderful sensitivity, the writer describes his spouse, Noga, who as a wife and the mother of a young child suddenly discovered that her partner was no longer, and would never be, what he used to be. In psychology that is called a secondary trauma, one that can affect people who are close to the victim. Such a massive blow sometimes erects a barrier between a husband and wife, or parents and children, and one of the most important tasks of convalescence is to destroy this barrier. At the beginning, Noga's shock, injury and struggle are so extensive that sometimes she thinks about jumping out of the hospital window and ending it all.

"I had the feeling of a world destroyed and I was very afraid that it would stay that way forever," Eshet-Alkalai writes in Noga's voice, in simple language that could not be clearer. But in the epilogue to this book, in the voice of his wife Noga, the author tells us how in the course of his work he reads to her the most difficult memories that came up while he was writing, and he has his wife say to herself: "Here you're telling me everything you wanted to tell and didn't know how. Here I am listening to things that were so frightening and that closed my heart. And I'm amazed how it was the distance that caused such great closeness between us."

Noga's story is one that has rarely been told. It sheds light not just on her own experience, but also on those of the wives of prisoners of war, the wives of men who have been wounded in war

(whether physically, psychologically or both), and their children. This second voice needs to be heard loud and clear.

As my students and readers know, I believe totally that the story we tell about ourselves has the capacity to repair the world and man. This story does not have to be the whole truth; it can include fragments of memories that are combined with the help of imagination into a single whole. The main thing is that it be whole. This book is unequivocal proof of the power of this approach.

Prof. Amia Lieblich is a psychologist. Her book "Look At Me" was published by Schocken this year (in Hebrew).

'What, you can't write?'

(Excerpt from "A Man Walks Home," by Yoram Eshet-Alkalai)

In my excitement I didn't sleep all night, and the next day, right after breakfast, I rush to the occupational therapy room and without preliminaries explain to the occupational therapist that I used to be a lefty and that I want her to teach me to write with my well hand. I'm so embarrassed that I don't tell her I can't read either. She gives me the gentle look she reserves for special cases, as though she had discovered an abandoned child in the corner. What, you can't write? How is it that we didn't know? Nobody asked me about it, I reply, trying to recall whether among the endless questions that Prof. Tzur asked me when I came to him on my first day in rehab I was asked whether I knew how to read or write. I'm quite certain I wasn't. There were only questions about practical things, like closing buttons, tying shoelaces, walking, sitting and wiping my bottom.

The OT says that although teaching writing is not included on the list of tasks in my rehab program, she is willing to help me after work hours. It will depend on you and you'll have to work on that on your own. And I, already a hostage to fear and to the need to take action, only ask impatiently when we'll begin to work. She looks at me skeptically, but already that afternoon she places a brown notebook and a sharpened pencil in front of me. I look at her and recall the notebook that Noga gave me, with the spiral and the yellow pencil stuck into it, which got lost in the confusion of the transfer to the rehab department, before I had a chance to use it. With a swift motion she pulls the first page out of the notebook and in clear and rounded handwriting she draws the letters of the aleph bet at the beginning of each row Here are gimmel and zayin, whose belly is opposite (make sure not to confuse them, she emphasizes). And the lamed, whose flag goes above the row and aligns with the line above, and the final mem, which looks like a loop, and the snail-like peh and the final peh, which looks like a G sharp staff, and the heh with the double arc, and the simple (only a vertical line), and the yod, which is actually an abbreviated , and the het, which looks like a gate, and the kaf, which is a het that has fallen to the right. And when she finishes, there are clear and easily legible letters written on the page. Oh, how did I forget the print letters, she remembers, and immediately next to each letter adds its print form in straight and firm lines. So you'll learn this too, she says. And I look at the mass in front of me and don't know how to begin.

How to begin? the OT asks herself out loud, but as someone who likes perfect order, it's clear to her that we have to start from the beginning, from aleph, until in the end we arrive at tav. On a clean page she draws a nice aleph - with a ninth-month belly, she says giggling - and proudly points to the perfect arc, with a vertical line straight as a ruler to its left. And then she leaves me and goes to take care of other wounded men, not before she instructs me not to stop before filling up an entire page with the letter aleph, and she is not satisfied until she adds as an afterthought: And on the other side write a full page of the print aleph.

YOM KIPPUR'S TRAGIC HERO

By Zalman Shoval Haaretz 20 10 2011

The minutes of discussions from the beginning of the 1973 war add new dimensions to the role played by the defense minister at the time; Moshe Dayan , says the author, has been punished by history for sins that were not his own.

Every year around Yom Kippur, numerous articles are published about the war that broke out in 1973 on the Jews' most sacred day. Last year, attention was focused on various papers from the Israel State Archives detailing consultations in the bureau of Prime Minister Golda Meir during the first four days of the war.

The minutes of those meetings, however, do not shed new light on most of the questions involving that war. The novelty in those articles, rather, is in how they add a dimension to the claim that the defense minister at the time, Moshe Dayan, was the war's tragic hero. Dayan warned military leaders of what was about to happen, and even took several important steps, mainly in the north, that prevented a major calamity there. Despite this, Dayan would bear the mark of Cain over a disaster for which he was not responsible.

His primary "fiasco" was political and personal: He did not resign from the government when Meir, backed by a majority of her ministers from the Labor Party, rejected his proposals, which various sources, including Americans and Egyptians, say could have prevented the war. Nor did he resign after the government failed to make a clear-cut choice between his assessment (the correct one, as it turned out) and that of Military Intelligence. In his book "Eilam's Arc: How Israel Became a Military Technology Powerhouse," Brig. Gen. (res.) Uzi Eilam, who served on the Suez Canal front in 1973, writes that Dayan did not take on Meir ahead of the Yom Kippur War. The defense minister thought, and rightly so, that it would be wise to evacuate the Suez Canal line and deploy along the fortifications 10-15 kilometers to the east, leaving the Egyptians to sit on both sides of the canal, Eilam notes. Meir (with the support of Haim Bar-Lev and others), refused to budge an inch, and Dayan did not dare fight. In any case, apparently because he blamed himself for not going all the way on these two matters, Dayan offered to resign on the second day of the war, but Meir refused to accept his resignation.

History was also cruel to the war's second tragic hero, Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff David "Dado " Elazar, whose record as an esteemed, experienced commander and whose role in the war itself were overshadowed because he accepted the soothing, erroneous assessments of Military Intelligence ("There are reports that indicate war, but we dismiss them"). That is why Dado did not take all necessary advance steps to counter the evil. However, when the picture in all its severity became clear, it was Dado who made the right decisions, going over the head of the inexperienced GOC Southern Command Shmuel "Gorodish" Gonen, and he played a central part in the final victory.

'Low probability' of war

In his book "Israel's Intelligence Assessment Before the Yom Kippur War: Disentangling Deception and Distraction," the late Aryeh Shalev writes that on October 4, two days before the war broke out, MI's Collection Unit picked up a report that the Egyptian army had been given an urgent order to ready President Anwar Sadat's situation room. The report said Egypt was likely headed for war, but it remained stuck in the Collection Unit instead of being circulated. "Had this unusual report been received and circulated by the Research Department in real time, it would have had an impact on the intelligence assessment," says Shalev.

In practice, the delay made no difference, because a few days before the war, Dayan demanded the chief of staff review the intelligence personally and present his own assessment, after "going [directly] to the source" on which the evaluation was based. Elazar did as he was asked, but fully backed MI's assessment; in other words, he too believed there was "a low probability" of war.

As mentioned in one of the articles by Maj. Gen. (res.) Shlomo Gazit, then an adviser to the defense minister, "Dayan displayed more sensitivity and caution" than the IDF chief of staff. He therefore decided to deploy the 7th Armored Division to back up the northern front a few days before the Syrian offensive began.

The Agranat Report, published by the state commission of inquiry that reviewed the circumstances surrounding the war, notes that starting in 1972, Dayan warned the General Staff at least 11 or 12 times, in his inimical style: "Gentlemen, prepare for war." On at least one occasion, and possibly more, he predicted when hostilities would break out. Dayan, who possessed a broad political and military understanding, and in any event did not believe in the strategic value of the Bar-Lev Line - a chain of fortifications deployed along the Suez Canal - proposed, as noted, that the IDF retreat several dozen kilometers. That would have enabled Sadat to open the canal to maritime traffic and rescue Egypt from its economic and image crisis. His suggestion was not accepted. After hostilities broke out, Dayan once again demanded forces be withdrawn from the canal.

In an interview three years ago, the wartime MI head, Maj. Gen. (res.) Eli Zeira, who had no particular reason to defend Dayan, said the defense minister gave the most accurate predictions the day before the war began. Zeira described the decisive General Staff meeting at 9 A.M. on Friday, the day before war broke out: "Dayan contemplates and then provides the most accurate situation assessment that there was - and he tells us two things. First thing: The Egyptian exercise is a cover [MI's assessment was that Egypt did not intend to go to war and that all it was doing was holding a multidimensional military exercise]. It is not an exercise, they are going to attack. And the second thing he says, regarding the Egyptians: If they think they are going to surprise us - they won't surprise us."

Zeira added: "At 9:30 A.M. on Friday, 30 hours before the war, Dayan tossed out 'Eli Zeira's assessment.'" It is odd that there are people who call it the "Yom Kippur surprise," when there was no surprise at all, but rather an inability or unwillingness to internalize the requisite conclusions.

Following the war, an argument broke out among the public and the Knesset over the call-up of reserves on the eve of war. Dayan, who died 30 years ago as of this coming Sunday, was convinced the IDF could withstand the Egyptian offensive even without a full call-up. His opposition to calling up the reserves also had a political rationale. Dayan was worried that the United States might blame Israel if all-out war broke out in the Middle East, which among other things would complicate matters with the Soviet Union. The fear that Israel would be accused of aggression grew stronger as even on the morning of October 6, the Americans announced that "so far there are no visible preparations for war [on the Egyptian side]."

MI's biased assessment continued even into the morning hours of Yom Kippur itself. In the decisive meeting at the Prime Minister's Bureau, Maj. Gen. Zeira said: "Despite the fact that they [the Egyptians] are ready, I believe they know they would lose. Sadat is not in a position where he has to go to war. Everything is ready, but there is no compulsion, and he knows that the balance has not improved - he has not yet given an order to embark - it is possible he may back down."

Misreading the map

During the war's early hours and days, many of the military commanders failed to read the overall battle map. Dado briefed the government on the situation and on the possibility of crossing the Suez canal "even this day." He added that perhaps "one IDF bridgehead already exists on the other side of the Canal." Another report states that "the Egyptian deployment is crumbling and being beaten." All of this was on October 8.

According to the minutes from that same meeting, the optimistic messages about progress on the southern front came from a lack of communication between combat forces and the rear command. Contrary to the reports, the counterattack had failed. According to the minutes, Meir was "bemused" by Elazar's statements.

Dayan's assessments and predictions were more accurate. As early as October 7, he said at the Prime Minister's Bureau: "On the southern front, I suggest that we create a line on the Mitla. We'll give up on the canal and take a stand on the straits line, 30 or so kilometers from the canal. I propose we issue an order tonight to evacuate the posts [we] have no chance of reaching ... Any attempt to reach the posts is an erosion of tanks ... the canal line is lost." (The prime minister also expressed surprise, commenting: "I thought we would start to hit them the moment they cross the canal, what happened?")

Dayan once told me that he told the government at the time that it would not be possible to stop any serious force on the banks of the canal. Astonishingly, even after the Egyptians had crossed the canal and Dayan's doubts concerning the efficacy of the Bar-Lev Line had proved true in the harshest way possible, David Elazar still claimed "the historical argument is over - only two fortifications fell, some of them were evacuated and some are still being held and continue to fulfill their objectives well."

The argument over the fortifications was later used as the base for unfair accusations that Dayan had suggested "abandoning" casualties. Dayan had said that on the canal front, there was no choice but to give up the posts, and, "in places where it is impossible to evacuate, we will leave the wounded. Whoever gets there will get there - if they decide to surrender, they'll surrender. We need to tell them, we cannot get to you. Try to break through or surrender."

On this matter, Maj. Gen. (res.) Avraham "Bren" Adan, who commanded the 162nd Division during the Yom Kippur War, and who was not among Dayan's confidants, has attested: "It's true that throughout the years the IDF has educated that you do not abandon the wounded, but you don't rescue at the price of losing another division. The decision [by Dayan] was appropriate in keeping with the situation. Sometimes he saw farther with one eye than those with two eyes."

'Golda, they won't destroy us'

During the first few days, Dayan thought the war would last a long time - weeks, if not months - and that the IDF should deploy behind new lines to enlist everything at the disposal of Israel and Diaspora Jewry, and only then launch a counteroffensive against Egypt. He changed his mind and supported a speedier response after the situation on the ground justified that, particularly following the turning point in battles on the Syrian front, which enabled the transfer of forces from the north to the south. Had it not been for the success up north, it is possible that Iraq and Jordan might have joined the war, as Dayan told the government.

Dayan was criticized for his despondent appearance on television not long after the war began. This stemmed from an explicit government decision that "we have to be straightforward with the people, because the press is drawing a warped picture" - i.e., overly optimistic - and the public must be told how severe the situation is.

Despite the grave impression that the television appearance left on viewers, Dayan did not despair even in the most difficult moments. For example, when Meir suggested on October 9 that she go to Washington to tell U.S. President Richard Nixon that military aid being given by the Soviets to the Egyptians could lead to Israel's destruction, Dayan calmed her down: "Golda, they won't destroy us."

The minutes from the meetings of the government and General Staff in the early days of the war confirm that Dayan was one of the few senior decision makers at the time, if not the only one, to behave responsibly, soberly and impartially. He was not afraid to analyze the situation even if it was inconvenient and pessimistic.

One day, when I returned to Tel Aviv for a few hours (I was a Knesset member, but when the fighting broke out I enlisted) to attend an emergency Likud meeting, I took the opportunity to approach the defense minister and ask his opinion on the public and political ramifications of the war. Dayan replied (through Maj. Gen. Gazit) that his sole hope was that a state commission of inquiry would examine things in an unbiased way. I passed that on to Menachem Begin. He asked me to tell the defense minister that he accepted his suggestion in full and that the Likud faction would support the formation of a commission of inquiry.

Since then, 38 years have passed. Now, when most of the key players are no longer living and only the thousands of bereaved families continue to mourn their loved ones, the time has come for history to do justice.

Zalman Shoval was responsible for Israel's overseas information when Moshe Dayan was foreign minister, in the government of Menachem Begin. Later, he served twice as Israel's ambassador to the United States.

YOM KIPPUR WAR REDUX / HOW ISRAELI AND U.S. LEADERS IGNORED THE ARAB DRUMS OF WAR IN 1973

By Amir OrenTags: Haaretz 08 10 2011

Amir Oren explores how newly released documents reveal details of American and Israeli leaders' blindness to the warning signs.

If only they had listened to Sharon, maybe the 1973 War would have been averted. Not GOC Southern Command up to 15 July 1973, Maj. Gen. Ariel Sharon, who left the Israeli Defense Forces just in time to be eligible to participate in the upcoming elections. The general, who would join the party born from the merger of the Liberal and Herut parties, was just as insouciant as his rivals on Israel's political left and among military brass. He too believed that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat would avoid conflict, and that if despite this war were to erupt Egypt would be harshly beaten.

But there was another Sharon, probably a first name of a woman that escaped censorship. Her full name is on file at the National Security Agency, an agency dealing with signal intelligence,

called Unit 848 during the 1973 War. Only now, nearly 4 decades later, the NSA reveals that their Sharon warned about the event to come, but was ignored because of her lowly rank. In this she is like Lt. Benjamin Siman-Tov of Sothern Command Intelligence, whose warnings went unheard by his commanders.

The NSA is an intelligence gathering agency that had two major shortcomings in 1973: its attention was focused on intercepting information on Soviet attacks with only marginal attention going to secondary conflicts such as the Israeli-Arab conflict; its research facilities were not as developed as those at the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies, at the time. During the 60s it had satellites gathering electronic information, but had yet to accept that manned missions could be more of a liability than strength. So it was that within six months, during 1967-1968, two navy vessels under the command of the unit were involved in serious incidents – USS Liberty was attacked by the IDF and the USS Pueblo was commandeered by North Korean forces.

The NSA was nearly always headed by a 3-star general or admiral, usually without any expertise in intelligence. To further their career and return whence they came with a forth star on their collar, these commanders did their best to avoid rocking the boat. During August 1973, after only a single year, the head of the NSA, an Air Forces officer, who distinguished himself in the Apollo Project, was replaced by another Air Force officer. These men did not take their assignments in order to pick a fight with the CIA or the State Department.

According to a paper published by the NSA historian in the Agency journal, declassified this year, Sharon was a “special research intern,” assigned to the NSA Middle East and North Africa department, “not an expert on the Middle East, but a highly qualified and convincing handler, backed by experts.” One of the agencies top officers “was convinced that war was imminent, and as September progressed, more and more research officers became convinced that bloodshed was going to erupt; but had no official channel relay their concerns, because Intelligence Community Standing Order no. 6 specifically barred the NSA from generating ‘final intelligence assessments,’ meaning reports analyzing raw intelligence.”

Once Sharon was convinced of the need to issue warning, “her skill as a handler was seen as the way to disseminate the information, and she was assigned with the task of briefing the intelligence community. She faced a skeptical crowd on 4 October. Egyptian and Syrian began concerning the CIA in mid-September.” Even though the Israelis tried to ease U.S. concerns, “it was reported that the Israelis themselves were second guessing their assessments and had sent an intelligence gathering mission over the channel that morning. The Deputy Head of the CIA, General Daniel Graham, became worried and arranged for Sharon to brief Samuel Hoskinson, the CIA’s Middle East expert.”

Without a sound

The private briefing didn’t help. “Hoskinson was unconvinced. He maintained the political climate didn’t suit an attack, arguing that all the evidence presented could also indicate increased activity due to the holding of military maneuvers, like those held by the Egyptian army in the previous two years (It would later turn out that these were drills in preparation for the crossing of the Channel). An intelligence community report, distributed on 4 October, while it was still nighttime in Israel, stated that war was unlikely, a conclusion that will stick to the intelligence community like the failure to anticipate Pearl Harbor. On 5 October, the U.S. military attaché in Tel Aviv reported that the Israelis are deliberating their actions and would like to receive instructions, which were not given.”

Standing Order 6 was changed after the war. Ever since, providers of raw intelligence are allowed to evaluate it and issue warnings. “It is still unclear why Sharon was sent to brief the intelligence community without the backing of the NSA command, which would have increased her credibility in the eyes of the community ‘elders.’ Could this have been an attempt to eat the cake and keep it too – if they become convinced the NSA gains prestige, if they don’t, the blame doesn’t make it to high ranking NSA officers, without support from ‘upstairs,’ Sharon could later be disavowed.”

Sharon of Port Mead and Lt. Siman-Tov of Be’er Sheva, were not alone in failing in their attempts to warn of imminent war, Colonel Yoel Ben-Porat commander of Unit 848 and Deputy Chief of Staff General Israel Tal, faced similar faiths. Ben-Porat and Tal would never forgive themselves, even after decades, for not raising hell at the time. Tal implored the Chief

of Staff David Elazar (“Dado”) to plan for the worst. In a meeting held 4 October, Tal demanded the front lines be bolstered and reserves be drafted. If I am wrong and you are right, he said, we drafted them for nothing, inconvenienced them during the holidays and wasted money. That would be a shame, but not too bad. On the other hand if I am right and you are mistaken, we will face disaster.

The meeting broke up before the discussion was done, due to some constraints on the Chief of Staff’s time table. Still, Dado didn’t give up and continued his attempts in convincing his fellow officers, he proceeded to try convincing Intelligence Branch General Eli Zeira, to no avail. On Yom Kippur, when his dark predictions materialized, Tal’s spirits also darkened. His rivals in the IDF attacked him. Five years later, when Refael Eitan (“Raful”), a protégé of Tal’s, had become Chief of Staff, Minister of Defense Ezer Weizman took him out of reserves and reassigned Tal to the regular army to plan a multi-corps command of ground forces. Raful and his predecessor, Motta Gur, were worried that Weizman’s next step was to appoint Tal as head of the IDF and thus block their preferred candidate General Yanush Ben-Gal. Gur went on a public all out offensive on Tal, centered on his performance during the wars darkest hours. When he was made aware of the truth he apologized to Tal in a letter in 1984.

Secret group

The 2011 crop of declassified intelligence documents to shed light on the days leading up to the 1973 War, includes a volume of U.S. State Department documents from that year. The volume and its documents feature President Richard Nixon, and his chief council Henry Kissinger. These documents describe the contact the U.S. government had with Golda Meir, Anwar Sadat, King Hussein of Jordan, Yasser Arafat, and Leonid Bartenev. The reasonability for receiving information from the Americans and analyzing it wasn’t army intelligence’s responsibility or that of the Mossad, Israel’s intelligence agency, which were prohibited to spying on the U.S., but rather the responsibility of the country’s political leadership headed by Prime Minister Meir, who spoke with Nixon and Kissinger herself and via her excellent ambassadors, Yitzhak Rabin (until March) and Simcha Dinitz.

The Foreign Ministry, headed by Abba Eban, wasn’t privy to the more classified intelligence; even diplomatic information was kept from him. Meir and Security Minister Moshe Dayan, were not fond of Even. His counterpart in Washington William Rogers, Kissinger’s rival. Only a small group was let in on the full picture; Meir, Dayan, and the Minister Israel Galili, with Rabin and Dinitz functioning as messengers. They communicated with the White House, Kissinger, and National Security Council. Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Alon filled in for Meir when she traveled to Austria during the ominous week that preceded the war, but Dayan and the head of the Mossad Zvi Zamir neglected to fully brief him. Kissinger actively kept information from Rogers, holding from him central details on his contact with Sadat’s emissary Hafez Ismail.

One of Roger’s assets was Josef Green of the State Department, which headed the U.S. Interests Office in Cairo (full diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed during the Six-Day War). Green had a source: the head of the Saudi intelligence agency, Kamal Ahadam. And this Ahadam himself had a source, his close friend Ashraf Marwan, who was married to Nasser’s daughter. Marwan was the diamond in the crown of Israeli spies.

Some in the Mossad, notably Zamir are satisfied with the agency’s relationship with Marwan, others disagree. Rechavia Verdy, which headed the agency’s field intelligence command – Zomet, suspected Marwan’s loyalty. Verdy retired from the Mossad in 1972, and died in 2006, a while after telling his friend Asher Levi, a Brigadier-General in the IDF reserves, who was a high-ranking officer in the Southern Command during the War of Attrition and the 1973 War, “Marwan was a double agent.” Two of Verdy’s friends at the top of the Mossad hierarchy concurred.

Any one claiming that Marwan’s name leaked out only in recent years is simply mistaken. Already in 1974, some Israeli journalists knew, and not by way of intelligence officers, the identity of ‘Nasser’s son-in-law,’ and had received samples of information he handed his operators.

Zaira, who was assigned Head of the IDF’s Intelligence Command in October 1972, hadn’t a clue that the Mossad’s star informant was. He preferred not to carry such sensitive material on his trips abroad for meeting with the heads of foreign intelligence agencies.

According to the American documents recently published, Meir told Kissinger that Israel has a high-ranking source in Cairo, unusual even with the relations between Israel and the U.S. as tight as they were, the two sides usually were careful not to expose information about their assets. Upon receiving a report from Rabin on what was said about the U.S. in a secret Soviet-Egyptian meeting, Kissinger asked whether Israel knew what the U.S. said about it to the Egyptians. Rabin didn't answer.

A source of flesh and blood

In a consultation Dayan, Eliezer, Zeira, and others held on the morning of 5 October, the disturbing news that IDF intelligence intercepted information on the emergency evacuation of Soviet advisors and their families from Syria. "The Americans are unaware," said Zeira, expressing his concern that letting the Soviets know about the information gathered would "gravely endanger our assets. If we hear they took off, we could make it look like we found out from the Damascus International Airport." Dayan replied: "Ignoring the problem of protecting our source, politically, it is in our best interest that the Americans ask the Russians why they were leaving?" Zeira: "After they get home." Dayan: "Regarding the phrasing, I agree we shouldn't expose our asset."

Zeira and Dayan were, apparently, talking about information obtained by intercepting communications. The source Meir told Kissinger about in the afternoon of 22 October, at the Mossad academy, was a source of flesh and blood. She mentioned him in passing, in a discussion focused on the attempts to stop the fire at the channel, with Kissinger's assistant taking notes. The conversation continued, without raising any special attention. Only later after the conversation was analyzed by intelligence officers, the meaning of Meir's slip was exposed.

"Sadat doesn't live in reality," Meir once complained. "He thinks he will win. We have a source that told us that Sadat, when talking about returning lost land even at the price of one million casualties, actually means it."

Whether credible or not, Marwan wasn't the highest-ranking of Israeli sources. Even more prominent than him was King Hussein. The scientific adviser to the Agranat Commission, which investigated the IDF's failings leading up to the 1973 War, Yoav Gelber, described Hussein as Meir's 'source' in a letter he sent her family. "Exposing a source is the responsibility of the source's handler," Gelber wrote.

When the source's handler is also the one to make the assessment, it is difficult to emotionally disconnect from him. As was the case in the Mossad, with Zamir's defense of questioned Marwan's fidelity, as well as, in the case of the CIA, whose right hemisphere served as a secret channel of communication with Sadat, while the left hemisphere was responsible of assessing the information coming in through this channel. So was the case with Meir, who on the 25 September, heard from Hussein the true facts about the Syrian and Egyptian preparations for assault, accompanied by the faulty assessment that this attack will most likely never take place. According to the American documents, this wasn't the first warning Hussein gave Israel that year. On 3 May, Hussein warned: "A great international military fiasco in the region is imminent. Ground forces from Algeria and Sudan will soon be in Egypt. Morocco will send forces to Syria, Libyan Mirages are already in Egypt. Substantial Iraqi forces will be found by the Iraqi-Jordanian border, under a unified command. The Iraqis wanted to station Lightning fighter jets in Jordan, but they will be stationed elsewhere. The ambassador Denitz commented on the information provided by the Jordanian monarch that it was verified by other Israeli sources of information. It was known that the Syrians had a central role in any military action and that they have begun preparing their forces.

"What do you think?" Kissinger asked.

"We think," answered Denitz, "the king is inclined to exaggeration. He's an alarmist." He added "We are more concerned by the fact that we have similar information from another source. Egypt is also involved. (It's supposed to take place) within a month."

Two to three months earlier, before Meir's visit to the White House, Nixon and Kissinger debated how to respond to her request to receive (and manufacture in Israel) hundreds of additional fighter jets. They adopted the CIA's position that the advantage the IDF has over the Arab militaries would keep even without the jet deal. Richard Helms, which finished that same months his seven year service as head of the CIA, told Nixon that the IDF "will be able

to beat each and every one of its enemies and all of them together, as long as the Soviets don't get involved in the next five years, without additional planes. Their advantage is colossal, even though they won't admit it, what proves how good they really are. Damn it, the Israeli's are really so much better off with what they have than their pitiful and stupid neighbors that cannot do a thing without the Russians."

A bluff

The Israeli-friendly Helms was sent to Teheran, as U.S. ambassador to Iran. He was replaced as head of the CIA by James Schlesinger, who held a much cooler sentiment towards Israel, which a few months later was once again promoted and made Secretary of State. The mid-April Israeli warning to the U.S. on Sadat's intentions to cross the channel and attack Israel during mid-May, seemed to him suspiciously sudden. He didn't think it likely war would break out, and if one did it surely would be Israeli who starts it.

On 16 April, Schlesinger reported to Kissinger that the Israeli concerns over Egyptian actions against Israel contradict the up-to-date intelligence assessments heard by the military attaché to Tel Aviv, in conversation with the head of the IDF's intelligence's research department, brigadier-general Arye Shalev, on 12 April. At that point Shalev didn't believe Sadat decided to restart the war with Israel, nor that he was likely to do so soon. (He was right the decision was made at the end of August.) He remained steadfast in this position, in spite of the developments in the Egyptian army, including the arrival of Libyan Mirages.

Schlesinger added that the actions being taken by the Egyptian army are not indicative of intentions to renew the fighting but rather of an Egyptian "bluff", intended to put pressure on Israel and the U.S. and to distract Egyptian public opinion from internal problems. On 5 May, two days after his conversation with Denitz, Kissinger received an updated CIA assessment: "The Arabs' patterns of activity do not indicate that violence is expected to break out before the UN discussion on the Middle East, at the end of May, we find it unlikely that Sadat will attempt any large-scale operations in the next six weeks. The Arabs want to apply maximum psychological pressure on us and the Israelis. There is a danger that these actions will gain momentum of their own in the future. The Israelis are following the situation closely, and are probably more concerned than their intelligence assessments show. These assessments still state Sadat will not go to war."

A time for war

In a security-diplomatic discussion held 15 May, Schlesinger reported on an intelligence gathering mission held over Egypt "between a week and ten days ago." No equipment was transported to the canal, he said. This means that Egypt only has air raids as viable attacks on Israel, air raids that would be "highly unintelligent on their part." Kissinger also remembered seeing plans to land paratroopers in the Sinai, but Schlesinger insisted: if Egypt were to start something, it will be a part of a diplomatic ploy to gather sympathy after being beaten by Israel, "and even if they are talking about getting a foothold in the Sinai, we believe they will not be able to hold it for more than a week, which will not be enough to allow them to kick start negotiations."

These discussions included all the basic parts of Sadat's plan: crossing the canal, a foothold east of the canal, the renewal of negotiations – and the assessment that the plan will fail. On 17 May, the CIA assessment stated that Sadat believes the situation is "unbearable for himself and for Egypt," and that therefore he is issuing threats, in hopes that this will entice the U.S. to put pressure on Israel. "Hostilities between Egypt and Israel seem unlikely in the next few weeks. The danger may rise if Sadat feels the discussions at the UN, during early June and the Nixon-Brezhnev summit at the end of June will not bring his country favorable results. Hostilities between Israel and the Arab world in 1973 will not include extensive land combat like on 1967 of a lengthy war of attrition like that fought in 1969-1970. Small and short commando operations or artillery barrages from Egypt followed by massive Israeli reparations are possible, though. An Israeli preemptive airstrike will be launched if Israel will receive the impression that Egypt is on the verge of an air raid on Israeli civilian targets.

On the day Hussein gave Kissinger an additional warning, all Syrian forces were given the order to concentrate on night combat. A top secret operation plan was written for a three-division night attack on the Golan Heights – clearing the Israeli front lines, followed by an armored divisions thrust the next day to capture the rest of the Golan. Iraq may provide to

divisions as strategic reinforcements. Large quantities of Soviet military equipment including anti-aircraft missiles arrived at Syria in the past few months (The CIA has approved most of the information provided by Hussein until the arrival of equipment from Syria). It is possible that the Egyptians will soon begin some kind of action against Israel, it is also possible that the Syrians will be the first to attack only to be joined by an Egyptian attack on the canal.

Two weeks later, the head of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Ray Klein sent Secretary of State Rogers, a more dire assessment regarding the possibility of war: If the deadlock between Israel and Egypt will not be broken in the UN discussions, "we estimate there is a higher than 50% chance that war will erupt by autumn. Sadat has no illusions that Egypt will be able to beat Israel militarily, but he is on the verge of deciding that only limited hostilities hold a real possibility of breaking the deadlock in negotiations, by forcing the world powers to get involved and force a settlement. If he stops debating the necessity of military action to bring a change in the American position, he will only need to decide on the timing and scope of the attack.

On the eve of the war, Klein predicted that despite the information received on Syrian intentions to attack Israel, "the political climate" was not ripe for such an attack, and Israel hasn't expressed its concern. "Are ability to attain evidence of the preparations of land forces for war in Syria are very limited," Klein explained.

After the war the new head of the CIA, William Colby, dismantled and reassembled the CIA's body responsible for issuing intelligence assessments. The CIA had not only failed to predict the war but also, once it began, initially, failed to determine which side started the war – Israel or its enemies. The NSA wasn't fast enough to provide Colby with quality wiretaps, and only intercepted Damascus Radio which reported the war was started by Israel.

The mutual eavesdropping between Tel Aviv and Washington, between IDF's intelligence units and the CIA, also contributed to the failure. The glass separating the two intelligence agencies was a mirror not a window. But the final word, with full logic, was given by Golda in a goodbye meeting with the new commander-in-chief Gur, after she announced her decision to step down in 1974.

The government is the supreme commander of the military and of intelligence. It also evaluates state and military intelligence. If responsibility is passed down from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense to the Chief of Military Intelligence, to the head of the research officers - and if we believe in the holiness of our sources, we arrive at the absurdity of Ashraf Marwan as the prime minister of Israel.

Golda reminded the major-generals that the raw intelligence does not speak for itself. It needs a spokesperson, it needs an interpreter. "I am afraid that the shock that struck the intelligence corps might cause people to be discouraged from interpreting pieces of news" said Golda to the new chief of intelligence, Shlomo Gazit. "Do you believe we must strengthen them? And while I do agree that we might this is the best intelligence in the world, they say that if you get burned, you become afraid, and it's only human if humans say that it is best not to take chances, to remain neutral, and not say what we think. I believe that this could also be disastrous."

"I gave the order to bring back the term 'low probability' to the lexicon", dared Gazit. "But only if it is used properly," responded Golda in agreement.

ON ONE OF ISRAEL'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL BATTLE CAMPAIGNS

By Uri Bar-Joseph Haaretz 09 10 2011

'Crossing' is the most comprehensive study of one of the toughest battle campaigns in IDF history, the Yom Kippur War's crossing of the Suez Canal.

Tzliha: Shishim Sha'ot Be'oktober 1973 (Crossing: Sixty Hours in October 1973), by Amiram Ezov. Dvir Publishers (Hebrew) 317 pages, NIS 89

The crossing of the Suez Canal during the Yom Kippur War was one of the most difficult, important and controversial battle campaigns in the history of Israel's wars. In the fighting on the first night of the operation (October 15-16, 1973), codenamed Abirei Lev ("Knights of the Heart"), the 14th Brigade, under Col. Amnon Reshef's command, lost 120 combatants. Another 62 soldiers were wounded. In the entire history of the Israel Defense Forces, no brigade had ever paid such a high price in bloodshed within so short a time. The following night, the 890th

Battalion lost 41 soldiers, and more than 100 were wounded, in the Battle of the Chinese Farm. Over the four days of the campaign, 450 Israeli combatants were killed, with another 1,200 being wounded. This was the price paid to attain the strategic turning point on the Suez front. The turning point was indeed attained.

The crossing's battles also became the central focus of the "war of the generals," as well as of fights between historians. Ariel Sharon's version, as commander of the 143rd Division, which bore the brunt of penetrating and establishing the bridgehead, and which was written up by the journalist Uri Dan, who had been sitting in Sharon's command half-track, and by Sharon himself in his autobiography, faces off against the version of Avraham "Bren" Adan, commander of the 162nd Division, which crossed over to the western bank of the canal; and against Hanoach Bartov's version in his biography of David Elazar, the IDF chief of staff during the war. The echoes of the battles the paratroopers fought at the Chinese Farm largely overshadowed the no-less heroic fighting that was waged by the 14th Brigade. It is no wonder, then, that many aspects of this campaign remain controversial to this day.

More than a decade

Dr. Amiram Ezov toiled for more than a decade in the IDF history department researching the war on the southern front. His new book presents only part of that project, and the result is a credit to his efforts. "Crossing" is the most comprehensive, accurate and authoritative study that has appeared to date on the battle campaign that was one of the toughest in IDF history.

The book opens with a description of the strategic dilemma on the southern front at the end of the war's first week, on October 12. On the one hand, there was the assessment of Israel Air Force chief Benny Peled that continued erosion of the air force would soon lead to a situation in which he would not be able to provide support for a broad-scale crossing maneuver.

Following the failed IDF offensive on October 8, the crossing of the Canal and outflanking the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd armies that were deployed on its eastern bank was considered to be the only option for attaining victory on the southern front. On the other hand, there was concern that an attempted crossing before most of the Egyptian armored forces moved over to the eastern side might end in failure, creating a situation in which the IDF was left with insufficient strength to protect Israel.

After deliberations on October 12, Golda Meir's war cabinet was leaning toward agreeing to an immediate cease-fire, which meant admitting defeat on the southern front. But then critical information arrived from the Mossad that the Egyptians were preparing to resume the offensive. A decision was made to wait for the offensive, defeat it, and then move to a counterattack. And, indeed, the defeat the Egyptians suffered in their offensive of October 14 is what made it possible to embark on the operation to cross the Suez Canal.

Ezov does a fine job of describing the difficulties the complex operation entailed: The IDF had no experience negotiating a water obstacle; contrary to all the planning, the operation did not commence at the waterline itself but rather kilometers from there, and penetrating the Egyptian deployment and clearing the crossing zone became the main effort; all of the movement to the bridgehead took place on the first night along a single route, which created a massive traffic jam; and the units that had practiced transporting the bridging to the waterline were fighting elsewhere, so the ones that ultimately carried out the job ran into trouble because they were inexperienced. As a result, the first bridge, the pontoon bridge, was laid over the canal 48 hours after the operation began and the second bridge, the roller-bridge, 33 hours later. The plan for the Abirei Lev operation called for both bridges to become operational on the first night of the operation.

All of the units in one piece

Most of the book deals with the fight, in large part by Sharon's division, to take the crossing zone. Here Ezov navigates between all levels of the campaign, and Ezov simultaneously and sure-handedly weaves the roles that were played by all of the units into one piece: the fighting by the 14th Brigade tanks at the Lexicon-Tirtur junction on the first night, in which 56 tanks were lost, and the heavy price the "Shunari force" paid that night in trying to break through that same junction; the slow and determined movement along the congested route of the reservist paratroopers brigade, which was supposed to cross over first and take the bridgehead on the western side of the canal; the unavoidable mishaps in bringing the bridging equipment to the waterline, which, together with the ongoing failure to eliminate the blocking of the

Tirtur route, completely disrupted the operation's original timetable; the attempt to seize control of the route by means of paratroopers instead of tanks, which resulted in the 890th Battalion's tragic battle at the Chinese Farm; the constant worry that because of the delay in laying the bridges it would be necessary to recall the force that was already operating west of the canal; and the successful end to the campaign, when the pontoon bridge was erected and the 162nd Division began to cross over it and execute its original mission, encircling the Egyptian 3rd Army.

That same collection of factors that disrupts every battle plan (what is termed in warfare studies "Clausewitzian friction") played a key part in determining the unfolding of the campaign. Not only did the combatants lack good operational intelligence, but also in quite a few cases the senior command had difficulty reading the picture of the battlefield correctly. This difficulty stemmed not only from complicated operational conditions, but also from the growing lack of trust between Sharon, whose division was tasked with missions that in retrospect turned out to be greater than it could handle, and the rest of the campaign's commanders, who suspected him, sometimes justly, of not telling the whole truth. Ezov describes this friction in detail, in some cases while making use of source material that was never used before now. In one such case Moshe Dayan wonders, a few hours before the Chinese Farm battle began, why the 890th Battalion has to be sent on this dangerous mission when "a single plane with CBU" (cluster bombs) could achieve similar results. Sadly, this ministerial comment was not accepted □ and the price the paratroopers paid was a heavy one. But in the end the IDF got the job done. This accomplishment, against all odds, was a product not only of the high professional level of both reservists and conscripts, primarily the tank crews, but also, and mainly, of the fighting spirit and value of persistence. Writes Ezov: "Even when it encountered obstacles that at times were perceived as insurmountable, even when it suffered losses on a scale no one had foreseen, even when entire units disintegrated □ the IDF streamed westward, and did not stop streaming until the cease-fire was declared." And indeed, the IDF that comes across in his book and in everything that is known about the '73 war in general was evidently the best army ever at Israel's disposal.

Extraordinarily fine

Three things make "Crossing" an extraordinarily fine book. The first is the expertise. The many years of research Ezov conducted in the IDF history department made him the authority in Israel on the subject of the crossing and what preceded it. The second is the wealth of source material. Ezov apparently had recourse to the best sources you can find on the events of those days, sources that any other scholar can only dream of, and he made proper use of them, even though he did not always credit them with the requisite source citation. The third is the lack of bias. Ezov makes an obvious effort to present every aspect of the campaign, without giving preference to one narrative over another. The overall result is the most authoritative description to date of the crossing campaign, and a book that will stand the test of time for years to come.

This review cannot end without addressing the disagreement that the book's publication gave rise to between the author and the IDF history department. As mentioned, the book is grounded in the research that Ezov conducted for many years in that department, in the course of which he wrote several volumes about the war on the southern front. The department's head, Prof. Alon Kadish, felt for some reason that revisions were necessary; when Ezov refused to comply, it was decided not to distribute the study within the IDF despite its great contribution to research on the war. This is not an exceptional case.

Despite the interest that the Yom Kippur War generates to this day among the Israeli public, the IDF history department through the ages and various parties in the IDF systematically prevent any authoritative publication about the war, and take care to preserve the monopoly they have on the material in their archives. As a consequence, nearly everything that has been published about the war to date is journalistic literature, some good and some less so, and personal memoirs. These have not been grounded in systematic and orderly research that relied on authoritative sources.

The effort invested in preventing authoritative, objective, high-quality publications about the Yom Kippur War runs counter to the public interest in the subject. It is high time the IDF released to the general public, in part veterans of that war who paid a heavy price for it, all of

the relevant material stored in its warehouses. No big security secrets there, but of potential for studies of quality, as Amiram Ezov's book demonstrates, there is plenty.

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SOVIET ENVOY WARNED NIXON AND KISSINGER AGAINST MIDEAST WAR IN 1973, DOCUMENTS REVEAL

By Amir Oren Haaretz 02 01 2012

Soviet ambassador Gromyko warned Nixon and Kissinger just a week before the Yom Kippur War that they could 'all wake up one day and find that there is a real conflagration,' but the Americans didn't heed him.

Twenty years have passed since the breakup of the Soviet Union, which for almost two generations was the main source of support for Arab hostility toward Israel. The Soviets misled - and perhaps were also mistaken - with regard to the issue of Israeli preparations to attack Syria in May 1967, but they were correct regarding intentions, at least those of the General Staff headed by Yitzhak Rabin. The war that emerged out of the crisis led to the great Israeli victory in the Six-Day War.

It was too great a victory: Because of a few too many hours of fighting on the deserted Syrian front, and a few more kilometers gained by Israel on the Golan Heights, the Soviets lost patience and severed diplomatic ties. Israel lost its embassy in Moscow. With it, Israel lost the ability to sense the mood in the Kremlin and to maintain regular channels with authorized spokesmen from the Soviet leadership.

The insight that this was an expensive loss surfaces from another volume of previously classified, recently published documents from the Nixon administration. The high point is the report of a conversation from September 28, 1973, about a week before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Soviet ambassador to Washington Anatoly Dobrynin were guests at the White House. President Richard M. Nixon received them, together with his national security adviser and newly appointed secretary of state, Henry Kissinger.

"And now," said Gromyko, after a discussion of other matters, "just a few words on the Middle East. Your assessment and ours do not fully coincide, even if at first sight it seems that we agree, because both sides feel the situation is complicated and dangerous. But we have a different assessment of the danger because we feel the possibility could not be excluded that we could all wake up one day and find that there is a real conflagration in that area. That has to be kept in mind. Is it worth the risk?"

Nixon and Kissinger failed to take Gromyko's hint, and did not hasten to prevent the war that broke out on October 6, and the oil embargo imposed in its wake.

"Regarding the Middle East, it is a very important priority," declared Nixon. "You say we must realize the danger of waking up one morning and finding a war. But there is also the energy problem. The secretary has it as a direct assignment from me and we will push it, whatever the surface appearances may be. While we may have differences on how it turns out, we want progress on an interim basis certainly, or perhaps on principles."

Helmut Sonnenfeldt, the Sovietologist of the National Security Council, who was present at the meeting, didn't believe that an Israeli-Arab compromise was possible. "No matter how much in pain, the Israelis will probably use an atomic bomb before they concede the 1967 borders," he wrote.

At the end of the war Kissinger admitted that Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev had been correct at the San Clemente summit the preceding June, when he warned Nixon and Kissinger of an approaching military conflict. Kissinger said that on the morning of October 6, one of his colleagues had told him that some kind of problem had erupted between Israel and Egypt, something that Kissinger would be able to solve in two hours.

On the eve of October 6, 1973, a message was sent from Moscow to Nixon and Kissinger: "The Soviet leadership got the information on the beginning of military actions in the Middle East at the same time as you got it ... We repeatedly pointed in the past to the dangerous situation in that area ... We hope to contact you again for possible coordination of positions."

Another important message, via the same channel, was sent six days later, on the evening of October 12: "The Soviet leaders consider it necessary to bring in the most urgent way the attention of the President to the defiant, to put it straight, gangster-type actions of Israel, which, if they are not stopped from the very beginning, can still more complicate the situation in the Middle East and around it, which is dangerous even without such actions.

"The matter is, first of all, about the barbaric bombings by the Israeli aviation of peaceful population centers in Syria and Egypt, including Damascus, as a result of which there are numerous casualties among the civilian population. There are also Soviet citizens among those killed and wounded. The damage was also caused to the Soviet office buildings."

In a veiled reference to the Scud missiles that had clandestinely been placed in Egypt with their operators in the summer of 1973, the Soviets threatened: "We have the information, and we want the President also to know it, that the other side has a capability to deliver retaliatory strikes against Israeli cities, the action from which it has refrained up till now, if the bombings of the Arab cities by Israel are not immediately stopped."

That was a direct threat of independent activity, because the Scud units remained under Soviet control, while the process of absorption and training among the Egyptians continued. An even more direct threat appeared later in the message to the White House: "Further. During the night from the 11th to the 12th of October, in the Syrian port of Tartus, torpedo boats attacked a Soviet merchant ship, 'Ilya Mechnikov,' which delivered a peaceful cargo there. The ship caught fire and sank.

"There is hardly a need to explain what can be the consequences of such provocative actions against the Soviet ships on their way to the ports of Arab countries. Tel Aviv in this case should also realize absolutely clearly that it cannot expect that everything will go off all right for it. The Soviet Union will of course take measures which it will deem necessary to defend its ships and other means of transportation ... We expect that the United States will exert an appropriate sobering influence on the Israeli leadership."

'Our leaders always drove in Packards'

In transcriptions of the four hours of discussions on a cease-fire conducted by Kissinger in Moscow on October 21, Brezhnev revealed his main interest - American automobiles. He went into great detail about the features of the old Packard that served as a model for imitation for the Soviet government cars of the same, earlier period: "This is wider. The track is wider, achieves greater stability, center of gravity." He added that "Our leaders in those days, Stalin, Molotov, others, always drove in Packards." Kissinger asked if it was easy to drive. "Much better than the other car we use," replied automotive engineer Comrade Brezhnev, "but at 120 it starts vibrating."

Kissinger responded with high praise: "Coming to the Kremlin this morning, my car started vibrating at 250." Brezhnev confirmed, "A few days ago I arrived here on time and we drove 140 kilometers an hour, and I was sitting in the car as if sitting at my desk." In response Kissinger described two of the problems he faced. He said that he had a Mercedes but the Secret Service didn't allow him to drive, and that he had told the president that it wasn't fair to make him handle Vietnam and Israel in the same year.

The small talk didn't conceal the deepening dispute between the great powers over the cease-fire lines and the timing - where to stop the Israel Defense Forces, which had crossed over to the west bank of the Suez Canal and was trying to encircle the Egyptian Third Army on the east bank. On October 24, Brezhnev sent a sharply worded message to Nixon: "Let's both send forces [to separate the Israelis and the Egyptians], or we'll act unilaterally. We cannot allow Israel to act arbitrarily."

After the tension had escalated to the point of American nuclear preparedness - a demonstrative and cautionary move without any real justification - things calmed down and the cooperation was ostensibly renewed, before the convening of the Geneva Conference.

In a long conversation in Geneva on December 22, Kissinger dragged Gromyko into stories about the old days: "I've always had respect for Stalin's foreign policy. He had a long-range vision." Gromyko agreed and Kissinger said: "In 1939, you had to make a big decision. I think you were essentially right on the pact with Ribbentrop." Gromyko: "We didn't have any reasonable choice."

Kissinger expressed his agreement: "One could say that the pact made the war inevitable ... but there was very stupid leadership in Western Europe."

The Soviets had not yet realized at the time that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had abandoned them, gone over to the Americans and left Syria alone under their patronage. When they realized that Sadat and Kissinger had double-crossed them, they became bitter. On February 4, 1974, about two weeks after the separation of forces between Israel and Egypt, Gromyko and Dobrynin returned to Nixon and Kissinger.

"If we had wanted to act in the same way to trip the U.S. up on some Middle East matters, we could have done so. We could have found Arab leaders to work with us. But we did not take this course. This is plain speaking. It is for you to judge who gained and who lost. We feel that you lost."

Kissinger made a suggestion: We'll transfer the Israelis to our friends the Soviets. How will you do that, wondered Gromyko, and asked Nixon if he had a message for Brezhnev. "Personally I would tell the General Secretary he should not drive too fast," dictated the president. "I remember at Camp David when he drove his new car with me in it down the one-lane road, I was frightened to death we would meet a Marine in a jeep coming the other way and there would be an international incident. But I know that he is a very good driver." In response to Gromyko's words to the effect that the trade agreements between the two countries were still "virgin territory," Nixon declared that the moment Kissinger was installed in the State Department, there wouldn't be any virgins left there.

Widows and orphans

The following day Gromyko and Kissinger met again. Kissinger adhered to Israel's opposition to Soviet participation in Israel-Arab talks so long as the Soviets refused to renew relations with it. Gromyko reacted by asking whether the Israelis were concerned about their security and how big their nuclear arsenal was.

On March 25 Kissinger came to Brezhnev. On his table was a dome-shaped brass object which held six brass cartridge-like objects pointed upward - which held six cigarettes. Kissinger asked if it was a model of a MIRV (a collection of nuclear weapons carried on a single intercontinental ballistic missile). Brezhnev said: "Living generations of Americans have never experienced war on their own territory and never experienced a fascist advance as far as Stalingrad ... In Belorussia, every fourth person died in the war." Gromyko added: "Think of how many widows and orphans there are."

When Brezhnev mentioned that he had received two messages from the Japanese prime minister, Kissinger mentioned the continuing Soviet occupation of four Japanese islands. One message for every two islands, he said cynically.

That was an introduction to Brezhnev's suggestion to evacuate all the nuclear weapons from the Middle East, including aircraft carriers and submarines, in other words, to give up the advantage of the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the region. Kissinger anticipated the reaction of his navy. "Our chief of naval operations [Admiral Elmo Zumwalt], who is already very melancholy, would fall into a deep depression." Brezhnev wondered, "Why don't you find a more cheerful man for the job?" Kissinger reassured him that the chief of naval operations would be replaced in another three months.

"But our impression is you do have nuclear weapons in socialist countries," said Kissinger.

Brezhnev: We have no atomic weapons anywhere and don't give atomic weapons to anyone.

Kissinger: We don't give them to anyone but these aircraft carriers are related to the situation in the Middle East.

Brezhnev: That would be tantamount to our giving surface-to-surface missiles to Egypt and Syria." Kissinger: That is different. Aircraft carriers are under American control.

Brezhnev: Egypt and Syria would be only too happy to have surface-to-surface missiles.

Kissinger: The Egyptians told us you gave them surface-to-surface missiles. And Arabs never tell an untruth. Brezhnev: Sadat was offended at us for not allowing him to fire surface-to-surface missiles even without nuclear warheads."

Kissinger: One [Scud] was fired on the last day of the war. Brezhnev: They were under our control the whole time. Kissinger: We thought it was a very constructive move. But we haven't given surface-to-surface missiles to the Israelis.

Brezhnev: Incidentally, Egypt tells you one thing and us another.

Kissinger: I find it hard to believe Arabs wouldn't tell you the exact truth.

For the benefit of the readers who were not present, the recorder of the conversations added in parentheses: "Brezhnev and Gromyko smile, Kissinger laughs."

LESSONS FOR US NOW

By Efraim Halevy haaretz 04 01 07

"Kishalon Vehatzlakha Behatra'a" ("The Israeli Intelligence Assessment on the Eve of the Yom Kippur War") by Arieh Shalev, Ministry of Defense, 318 pages, NIS 85

Now that 33 years have gone by since the Yom Kippur War, Arieh Shalev, head of the Military Intelligence (MI) research division during the war, has written a book about it. Shalev headed the division for seven years before the Agranat Commission, which probed the war, recommended his discharge. Prior to this position, he held a whole series of intelligence jobs, at staff headquarters and in the field. He was considered one of the best and brightest of MI, and rightly so.

At the back of the book is a letter from MI chief Aharon Yariv that was sent to Shalev when he retired from active duty a year before the war. "Throughout this period... intelligence research, under your command, played a critical role in the service MI provides to Israel's military and political leadership. Without the work done by you and your team, I cannot imagine being able to carry out my own duties. You were literally my 'brain trust.'"

So we are talking, then, about a sourcebook written by no less than the "chief brain" of the intelligence corps in those days.

Shalev has no complaints about the decision to sack him. On the contrary, he submitted his own resignation long before the commission published its tentative findings, but was asked to wait until the final decision was reached. He accepts and justifies the conclusions regarding his personal responsibility, and openly admits that both he and his department were mistaken. On the other hand, he disagrees with the Agranat Commission's definition of what that mistake, or series of mistakes, was. In consequence, he believes that the conclusions reached by the commission are wrong and have no professional basis.

Shalev's book is thus the best textbook around for intelligence officers. Indeed, it is as if portions of it were written for an intelligence officers' course. Other parts grapple with weighty issues related to the division of power and responsibility: between MI and those who act on the information it collects, between those who assess - as opposed to those who gather - intelligence data, between the army and the political echelon, and between the military and political echelons and an official commission of inquiry. The failures of that time are a test case for those seeking to learn from the past.

Five failures

The author lists five intelligence failures on the eve of the Yom Kippur War: misjudging the character of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat; failing to spot the changed assessment among Egypt's leaders regarding the army's ability to launch a limited attack and capture part of the territory east of the Suez Canal; failing to appreciate the strategic implications of the Soviet supply of medium-range ground-to-ground Scud missiles to Egypt; failing to recognize the significance of Syria's moving its ground-to-air missile batteries closer to the border with Israel; and finally, the mistaken prediction, in view of all the above, that Sadat was unlikely to go to war.

The author rightly emphasizes that Israel had an excellent intelligence-gathering apparatus at the time, including reliable sources in high places. Thus it was almost inconceivable that Sadat would change his fundamental outlook without so much as a hint of it reaching Israel through one of these sources. Taking a broader look, Shalev writes that MI may be responsible for sizing up the opponent, but assessing the balance of power between Israel and each of its enemies is the job of the executive branch of the Israel Defense Forces.

Every branch of the IDF, up to the chief of staff, as well as the defense minister, believed at the time that the army's regular forces could hold off any attack by the Egyptian and Syrian armies. This approach was founded on an extra-large dose of self-confidence, and Israel's finest generals subscribed to it.

"We have one of the greatest armies in the world," declared Ariel Sharon, who was GOC Southern Command until the summer of 1973, in an interview with the Maariv daily. "Today I don't believe there is a military or civilian target from Baghdad to Khartoum... that the IDF could not conquer. In

the next war, Egypt's pullback line will be Cairo. Israel is so strong that defense is no longer its biggest problem." This, as we all know, is why the reserves were not called up - not because there was no war alert.

Shalev held the key post of head of the research division for six years before he was asked to appear before a government body for consultations. Even then, he was invited only because the MI chief was sick that day. Until then, only the head of MI attended meetings of the cabinet or the Knesset Foreign and Defense Committee. Shalev was summoned on October 3, 1973, three days before the Yom Kippur War broke out.

At this meeting, chief of staff David Elazar said: "Technically, it is possible that Israel could be attacked on very short notice by Egypt or Syria.... I must say that such a scenario is slightly more likely today than it was in the past, because of the anti-tank missiles." Just how seriously this statement was taken was illustrated by what happened next: As soon as Shalev rose to speak, he was signaled by various participants to keep it short. Minutes later, the defense minister was handed two newspapers, into which he buried his nose for the remainder of the meeting.

Responsibility

Of all the issues analyzed in this book, one of the most important and relevant for today is Shalev's discussion of the interface between the army and the political leadership. The author's view, which is a common one in the IDF, is that when the army presents an assessment or suggested course of action to the political echelon, its job is to persuade the leaders of the correctness of its assessment and the logic of this course of action. The moment the government adopts the army's assessments or recommendations, or the prime minister opts for an alternative, responsibility shifts to the government. It then becomes the government's assessment and decision.

On this critical issue, what could be better than to quote Yitzhak Rabin, who was elected prime minister in the wake of the Agranat Report and the public outcry that brought down Golda Meir's government: "I saw in this report a grave and objectionable attempt to introduce new and unacceptable norms in the political-military relationship.... Saddling the army with sole responsibility while clearing the government of all wrongdoing... seriously undermines the government's authority over the army.... When a war ends in victory, both the government and the army take credit for that achievement. When it ends in defeat, or something goes wrong, the army is left an orphan.

"In the future, the chief of staff will say to himself: I am placing all the material at my disposal before the cabinet, along with my recommendation. Until now it was clear beyond the shadow of doubt that from the moment the political echelon accepted my recommendation and ordered me to act on it, we shared responsibility.... As prime minister, it has never occurred to me to adopt the approach that lies at the core of the Agranat Commission's conclusions, with its warped division of responsibility between the government and the IDF General Staff."

A related issue discussed in the book is the degree to which the government and those who head it are obligated to accept the findings of a state commission of inquiry. When the Agranat Commission submitted its interim report to the cabinet of Golda Meir, the newly-appointed labor minister wondered out loud whether the cabinet could return it and say: "We have not received an answer regarding civilian responsibility, so first finish your work."

The justice minister informed the new cabinet member - Yitzhak Rabin - that the Agranat Commission is a sovereign entity and no one can tell it what to do. It is worth noting that this statement by the justice minister has never been tested in a court of law, and it is not at all certain that the High Court would adopt this stance.

Shalev dwells at length on whether the government and prime minister must implement the conclusions of a commission of inquiry. He devotes a whole chapter, entitled "Organizational Lessons," to the subject. He writes about the recommendation to appoint an intelligence adviser to the prime minister, and how MI chiefs Shlomo Gazit and Yehoshua Saguy, and Mossad chief Nahum Admoni, opposed the idea. Rabin put off choosing such an advisor when he was voted into office, but eventually gave the job to Major General (res.) Rehavam Zeevi, in addition to his duties as the prime minister's adviser on terror. Menachem Begin took Major General (res.) Yehoshafat Harkabi as his intelligence adviser, but Harkabi bowed out soon after, when he realized the job was only for show.

The commission's second recommendation was to cultivate greater pluralism in the sphere of intelligence evaluation. Toward this end, it proposed the establishment of assessment units in both

the Mossad and the Foreign Ministry. In its recommendations concerning the Mossad, a basic flaw was exposed in the work of the commission: It recommended that the Mossad evaluate only intelligence data gathered by its own sources. What good is it to evaluate partial data? This gave MI chiefs over the years an excuse to keep important information to themselves rather than share it with the Mossad. In this way, a recommendation of the commission became a liability in itself. Shalev, like many of his colleagues, is against this decentralization of responsibility for intelligence assessment, and he offers some valuable insights on this subject.

Settling scores

Shalev writes in sparing, dispassionate prose, with the exception of those passages where he settles the score with friends who claim that he ignored them when they warned him of the dangers. Audible in the background are echoes of the bitter arguments that went on in those days in the corridors of the military intelligence corps, although the author demonstrates a great deal of restraint toward those who publicly defamed him.

Among the other important issues Shalev raises are the reliability of sources in high places and the danger of becoming overly dependent on the information they supply; the difficulty of predicting a leader's decisions, analyzing character and anticipating shifts in behavior; and the difficulty of understanding and decoding conversations between leaders, such as the one between King Hussein and Golda Meir a few days before the war.

In the final chapter, Shalev reveals that the most important tip-off, received two days before the war, had to do with the rush to ready Sadat's war room. This piece of information only reached the MI chief and intelligence researchers three months after the war began! These words are italicized in the book, and they are the only ones in the book accentuated this way. If this information had been forwarded in time, writes Shalev, it would have tipped the scales in favor of declaring a war alert.

This is the one instance in the book where the author is maddeningly vague. Who passed on this information? Why wasn't it disseminated? What became of the person responsible for this appalling oversight?

The publication of this book is amazingly well timed in terms of its relevance for today. It should be required reading for the political leadership of this country, as well as all future commissions of inquiry, lest they make the same mistakes as the commission that probed the Yom Kippur War.

Efraim Halevy, former chief of the Mossad, is the author of "Man in Shadows: Inside the Middle East Crisis with a Man Who Led the Mossad," published by St. Martin's Press.

The never-ending story

By Ehud Ein-Gil

"Bekhzara Letsevet 4" (Back to Crew No. 4) by Dror Green, Sfarim, 223 pages, NIS 79

Little by little, our bookshelves are being filled by books describing "that" war from the perspective of the soldiers who fought in it. How real it looks, and how different from the standard portrayals we have encountered over the years in newspaper articles, the memoirs of generals and military chronicles.

The rank-and-file soldier, be it a tank crewman like Haim Sabato in "Adjusting Sights," or a radio operator like Yoram Kupermintz in "October, Diary of a War," or a gunner like Dror Green in "Back to Crew No. 4," already has the "big picture" of the war down pat. But when he returns to his personal memories of the war, he goes back to being a small cog caught in a cruel machine, lacking all control over his fate. Intertwined in his story are truncated images and slivers of memory, seemingly parenthetical and emotionally detached. Many could be the springboard for a journalistic inquiry or a documentary.

Advertisement

This is what Zeevik the gunner, one of Green's narrators, says about his first days of combat in Sinai: "We started out near Tasa, where we stayed for a couple of days. We fired, we ducked, we got shot at, planes swooped down on us. Baptism by fire, they call it. The whole time tanks were scurrying around like crazy bugs. Battalions of them would come and go. It was pretty scary to see them, because the ones that came back were all battered and dented. We advanced, very slowly, with everything around us in total chaos. At night they wouldn't let us bed down near our gun batteries, as we were accustomed to, because the tanks returning from combat didn't pay attention to where they going. They would zoom all over the place at top speed and there were cases of sleeping soldiers being run over."

That's it. These sleeping gunners crushed by speeding tanks are never mentioned again. Zeevik (i.e.,

Green) does not linger over them or try to find out who they are and how many might have been killed this way. For him, it is just another war scenario, as "normal" as any other. Green and his comrades came out of the war emotionally scarred, suffering from what is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and emotional detachment is a kind of defense mechanism. Repression supposedly protects their inner psyche.

But when the protective barrier bursts, and Green understands that all kinds of strange behaviors he has engaged in are really a consequence of this emotional injury, he discovers, sadly, that his mental state has only worsened: "It was not a liberating or pleasant realization," he says. "On the contrary, all the walls I had built to hide my problems from myself and others came crumbling down. In one fell swoop, all the energy I had invested in ignoring the trauma came gushing out. Instead of feeling relief, I was forced to cope with post-traumatic symptoms that I could no longer disregard."

These are the words of a man who spent years treating PTSD sufferers, training psychologists, physicians and psychiatrists, writing books on mental care and building up an Internet forum for those affected with PTSD.

Green's book was first published 14 years ago, twenty years after what he insists on calling the October War, because it lasted a whole month, rather than the Yom Kippur War, which compresses it into one day, i.e., the first day. Now, in the wake of the recent war in Lebanon, he has published an expanded version called "Back to Crew No. 4" which includes a new chapter that brings the book up to date. Describing a recent reunion with some of his old comrades and their commander, he identifies them by name and allows them to tell their side of the story.

Compilation of testimony

"It was only after the publication of the first edition, when people began to call me and tell me their war stories, that I discovered PTSD," he writes. "But I didn't count myself as one of them until two years ago." At that point, it became clear that not only had the "healer" failed to diagnose his own problem, but he was not able to treat it. "For over a year, I couldn't get up the courage to talk about it," he reveals. "I was afraid people would think I was crazy."

"Back to Crew No. 4" is a compilation of testimony from soldiers, not always in chronological, or logical, order. It reads quickly, like a good thriller, complete with mysteries and surprises. Despite the author's psychological training, there is no outright attempt to define what kinds of situations breed PTSD. Green's book (like that of Kupermintz, who also suffers from PTSD) is about soldiers who find themselves in the midst of a war, pretty much clueless about what is going on. As the bombs rain down around them, they devise all kinds of strategies to cope with their gripping fear. One thing they all have in common is that every round of shelling sets off the urge to urinate, so much so that at one point Green is too lazy to button up his fly, knowing that within a couple of minutes he will have to unbutton it again.

Green mentions that even back then he was distressed by the thought of having to police occupied territory, but he does not address the question of whether an unjust war increases the risk of PTSD. Could a lack of faith in one's commanding officers, combined with a sense of powerlessness, increase the risk, too?

In his book "Alamein," military historian Stephen Bungay offers a fascinating analysis of the factors leading to PTSD in World War I and II. Kupermintz, Green and their buddies will no doubt see themselves here:

"Shells always arrived suddenly and often without any warning. Men clung to the ground, holding their breath, trying to make themselves as small as possible by contracting every part of their bodies, including their bowels. Prolonged shelling led to constipation. After a few hours, the nervous system gave way and men broke down, either giving way to sudden, passing panic or becoming long-term psychiatric cases. In World War I, soldiers in trench systems with dug-outs withstood sporadic shelling for weeks. Sustained fire would incapacitate some within a day. Most men outside shell-proof dug-outs could only take a barrage for two to four hours. The desert offered scant protection. Bombing had a similar effect. Whilst the fear of high explosives was fully justified by their actual effects, the stress imposed by them was further heightened by the victims' complete lack of control. At least a fire-fight gave them something to do, and let them feel like soldiers rather than 'cannon-fodder.'"

The writer's book "Milestones on the Road to Hadhramaut"

HISTORY IS NOT MILITARY PROPERTY

Haaretz Tuesday, August 12, 2003

The reverberating excitement over the publication this past weekend of the transcripts made from tape recordings of what took place in the army's Southern Command headquarters during the Yom Kippur War is not surprising. Thirty years may have passed since those terrible days, but Israeli society is still under the influence of the shock of the war breaking out, and how it was conducted. The content of the transcripts published in Ma'ariv and Yedioth Ahronoth, was not surprising, though it did add to the pain and deepen the amazement. The tapes helped sharpen the picture of just what took place and what was said in GHQ in Tel Aviv, in the Southern Command HQ at Umm Hashiba and in the commands of the three corps that fought at the front. The overall picture is of confusion, a lack of control over information arriving disjointedly from the battlefield, and sometimes even impotence that verges on collapse - of people and systems. The ugly echoes of the "war of the generals" arise like evil spirits from the tape recordings. The intensity of the public reaction - including interest by generations that only heard about the traumatic events and did not experience them directly - is evidence of the intense eagerness for the truth to be exposed as much as possible. That is the only way to come to grips with the full extent of the bleak and gloomy reality of the events and to begin to recover from the results of collective shell shock. But opposing that healthy trend is the stubborn, inexplicable refusal by the army's uppermost echelons to allow publication of a comprehensive, authoritative study of the war prepared by the army's history department. The department's staff diligently gathered facts from all the possible sources, including tape recordings, and analyzed it all. A 700-page, two-volume summary of their findings and conclusions was written in 1992, called "The History of the Yom Kippur War." But all that was written in those two volumes has remained a secret to this day, even after its classification was reduced a few years ago from "top secret" to "classified." The two volumes are disseminated only among the uppermost levels of the officers corps and among senior officers who participated in the war - or their relatives or people with their power of attorney. Those former officers often use the material for preparing their own necessarily tendentious books while the official version, which by definition tries to achieve maximum objectivity, shamefully remains in the IDF archive. A junior officer or simple soldier who served in the war and carries the scars of the war on his body or soul is not allowed to examine this authoritative document, which was paid for with his taxes and ostensibly produced in his name and for his sake. There are those who criticize the judgment that guided past and present chiefs of staff who decided to prevent the publication of the study, for perhaps taking the feelings of military or political personages too much into consideration. In any case, it's been a long time since there was any convincing reason, security or otherwise, to keep the thick - but artificial - fog of battle around this document. Hopefully, the renewed historical discussion of the Yom Kippur War sparked by the discovery of the tapes will encourage the IDF and the political echelons above the army to publish its official historical truth.

2004 by Hakibbutz Hameuhad.

'TOP SECRET. EYES ONLY'

By Amir Oren Haaretz 03 10 2008

For 35 years, many Israelis have wondered whether the 1973 Yom Kippur War could have been prevented by diplomatic means. It is known that president Richard Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, held talks with Hafez Ismail, an advisor to Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Now we learn that there was another channel of communication, an Egyptian-Iranian one, that the U.S. failed to exhaust. The implication is that Israel did not exploit this avenue fully either, whether due to obliviousness or incompetence.

All this, and much more, can be found in a collection of secret documents that were declassified some weeks ago, courtesy of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. These are papers that relate to Richard Helms (1913-2002), who was director of central intelligence under presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, and U.S. ambassador to Iran from 1973 to 1976. The documents reflect the dizzying, treacherous speed with which all parties in the

conflict were involved - Israelis and Palestinians, Kurds and Egyptians, Iranians and Jordanians. Some of Helms' secrets have been exposed before, but now their shell has been stripped away, revealing yet more dark secrets inside.

"Top Secret, 6 April 1973, Eyes Only, Tehran. To: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Washington. From: Amb. Richard Helms, Tehran. Subject: Egyptian Plea for U.S. Mediation. During post-presentation-of-credentials talk with shah on 5 April, he asked me to inform president that Egyptian foreign minister [Mohammed Hassan] Zayyat on recent visit here pleaded with shah to intercede with President to persuade him to arrange some kind of settlement between Egypt and Israel. According to shah, Zayyat said quote Egypt will accept the Rogers plan unquote. When shah queried foreign minister as to why he was so concerned about settlement, Zayyat asserted that Sadat is in precarious domestic situation and that new leaders might take over Egyptian army at almost any time. Asked by shah who these leaders might be, Zayyat hemmed and hawed, finally said, quote Muslim Brotherhood unquote."

The shah, according to the document, was struck by the Egyptian minister's conciliatory tone. "Shah stated that he sensed in Zayyat's attitude almost irresistible domestic pressure in Egypt to resume some type of hostilities against Israel. With large army on active duty plus concomitant costs of maintaining it, Egyptian leadership feeling increasingly impelled quote to do something unquote. Shah said that he had told Zayyat most emphatically that Egypt should not frontally attack Israel across the canal under any circumstances. Quote fire your guns if you want unquote, the shah states he told him, but an attack into Sinai quote would be suicidal for Egypt unquote."

A month later, Kissinger replied to Helms in a cable that is now only partly readable: "16 May 1973. Top secret, sensitive, exclusively eyes only. From: The White House, Washington, Henry A. Kissinger. To: Tehran, Ambassador Helms/Eyes Only, to be held for arrival. Would welcome any advice the Iranians could [offer Egypt against resuming] hostilities against Israel ... No reason to believe that another round of [fighting] more likely to produce negotiations [than previous] rounds. What we need now at a minimum [is] a credible argument that Sadat wants peace and is prepared to negotiate realistically ... I find it difficult at this stage to see exactly what concrete role the shah could play in Arab-Israeli negotiations. He might have a role at some later point in providing supplementary encouragement or pressure. But it seems to me that there will have to be some specific framework established by others before an Iranian role could emerge."

Further contacts

The only hint of further contacts made through this channel appears about a month before the 1973 war, in a cable from Tehran to the new CIA director William Colby. The subject of the cable was a secret meeting held in Switzerland between Ardeshir Zahedi, the Iranian foreign minister who was appointed ambassador to Washington, and unnamed representatives of Sadat; the meeting was held with Kissinger's blessing (this was shortly before he replaced William Rogers as secretary of state).

"8 September 1973. You have stumbled right into one of Kissinger's operations. Zahedi did meet with Egyptians in Switzerland at Kissinger's instructions. Would strongly suggest you deep six this exchange and forget the whole matter. Delighted your contacts are on the ball, but honestly believe it would not be advisable for anyone in Agency to indicate to White House or State Department they knew anything about these meetings."

In July 1973, Jordan's King Hussein and the "chief of Israeli intelligence services" made separate visits to Tehran; the latter apparently was Mossad chief Zvi Zamir, who was Helms' colleague when he was CIA director. Helms met with the top Israeli official at his home on July 14 (and again in December, after the war). A week earlier, Helms had cabled Kissinger a report of his conversation with Hussein on July 5 at a Caspian Sea resort, where he was visiting the shah.

"Hussein has learned from his intelligence service that an attack for purpose of taking Golan Heights was originally planned for June, has obviously slipped, but could occur at any time from now on," Helms wrote. "Jordanians have a copy of actual military plan, which has been coordinated with Egyptians. (You can get it from Agency if its details are of interest.) It has also been coordinated with Iraq in the process of secret military talks... Hussein told me in

ultimate confidence that one of their sources is commander of one of armored brigades, which would lead assault on Israeli anti-tank defenses.

"... Of course, forgoing may be exaggerated, attack may never come... But to Hussein, advent of Algerian, Moroccan, even Sudanese troops plus some equipment means serious military plans are afoot in Syria... [Hussein] has been firm in refusing to place his forces under Egyptian command... He recognizes that Israel can cope with Syrians and Iraqis, but he has his own territory to worry about... Have sent none of the above to the State Department. Will send bland cable simply recording that I had visit with King Hussein."

What the Hashemite king did not know was that an American-Palestinian plot was being hatched behind his back: There was a certain willingness on Kissinger's part to accept the possibility that PLO leader Yasser Arafat would overthrow Hussein and take over Jordan. On the Palestinian end of the Kissinger-Arafat route was Ali Hassan Salameh, head of Fatah's security apparatus and leader of the Black September organization. On the American end was CIA official Robert Clayton Ames, who comes across in his cables as supporting the involvement of the Palestinians in the Middle East peace process, even at the expense of Jordan and Israel.

Ames' communications with Salameh became public knowledge after the death of both men: Salameh was assassinated by Israeli Mossad agents and naval commandos in Beirut in 1979; Ames died in an Iranian attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in 1983. Their talks were presented as a successful CIA effort to penetrate the PLO: They yielded warnings of impending terrorist strikes and thus helped to thwart attacks on American targets. The Helms papers now reveal, for the first time ever, that Arafat and Kissinger used the Salameh-Ames channel in Kuwait and Beirut to discuss a possible political settlement - and this was 15 years before the U.S. administration officially embarked on such negotiations.

Jordan as target

On May 1, 1973, CIA headquarters reported to the agency's office in Tehran that a memorandum was being prepared "on subject of Soviet covert activity directed against [the U.S.] and specifically Bkherald [the internal moniker of the CIA]." The background of the memo: "Soviets have made concerted effort convince fedayeen that Bkherald conspired with Israelis in 10 April raid into Lebanon," referring to the Israeli "Spring of Youth" operation, which targeted top Fatah officials. In late May Helms proposed that Kissinger "try to find time for a few minutes with Robert Ames of the agency who is assisting me here on the Persian Gulf problems. He will be in Washington until about 15 June."

The result is revealed in an unsigned memo from Ames to Helms, dated July 18, 1973: "Memorandum for: The Ambassador. Subject: Contacts with the Fatah Leadership. During my stay in Beirut on 9-10 July I contacted a close associate of Fatah leader Yasir [sic] Arafat ... I had a useful contact with this fellow in the past and his position in Fatah is fully established. He started off by stating that the Palestinians, in particular Arafat, had been gratified that the USG [U.S. Government] has been mentioning 'Palestinian interest' in its recent statements about the Middle East. The inclusion of this phrase in the Nixon-Brezhnev communique is considered significant. As a result of what Arafat feels is a new look in USG policy toward the Palestinian segment of the Middle East question, he requested this fellow to recontact me so that our former channel could be reestablished. I commented that I would forward this approach and any Fatah comments in the same channel as I had in the past, but that I could not predict the USG reaction ...

"My contact said that significant changes had taken place in the Palestinian Movement since I had last seen him in early March 1973 ... The fedayeen have no plans to go after individual Americans or American interests ... He said that, while he could not guarantee complete immunity from terrorist acts, no one can stop a determined individual gunman, Arafat wanted the USG to know that he had 'put the lid on' American operations by the fedayeen and that the lid would stay on as long as both sides could maintain a dialogue, even though they might have basic disagreements ...

"My contact stated that fedayeen activity would be confined to two areas: Jordan and Israel, in that priority. A basic change in Fatah ideology has finally been accepted by the Fatah leadership. Israel is here to stay and to have as one's basic tenet the establishment of a democratic state of Jews, Muslims and Christians in what is now Israel, is just not realistic. But

the Palestinians must have a home and that home will be Jordan. Arafat claims to have the agreement of all Arab States, 'including Saudi Arabia in principle,' to the replacement of the Hashemite Kingdom by a Palestinian Republic. Jordan, therefore, will be the prime target of the fedayeen, with acts of terrorism against Israel maintained to sustain the movement's credibility ...

"Arafat wants a real state or nothing. With regard to the USG, Arafat would like the answers to the following questions: A. What does the USG mean when it says Palestinian interest? B. How does the 'Peaceful Solution' take into consideration Palestinian interests? C. Is there any consideration being given to the Palestinian[s] in the plans for a partial or interim solution? If so, what are they? How can any solution be meaningful while Jordan exists?

"I commented that I did not know whether the USG would address itself to such provocative questions, but that I would pass them on. In the course of the conversation some interesting intelligence was gathered. The Palestinians are greatly concerned that certain right-wing Lebanese leaders and the Jordanians will try to provoke a second round of fighting between the Palestinians and the Lebanese Army. Arafat has made it clear to all that a second round must be avoided at all costs. The Palestinians will not respond to anything less than an all-out attack on their camps... Any renewal of the fighting must come from the Lebanese and it will be unprovoked. Should such an attack occur, Fatah will use bomb and incendiary squads in Beirut and burn the city...

"[Of] the confrontation countries, Syria is considered to be more apt to start something than Egypt. The Syrians 'talk less and do more' than the Egyptians. King Husayn [sic] is starting to feel his complete isolation in the Arab world and Fatah is working hard to keep the pressure on him, thinking he will break under the strain."

Arafat's questions were answered in an unsigned, undated and untitled document included among the Helms cables. "When the USG says that an Arab-Israeli settlement must take 'Palestinian interests' into account, it has two points in mind: First, there has to be a far-reaching solution of the refugee problem, and the U.S. is prepared to participate actively in a major program to help these people reestablish normal lives. Second, it is apparent that some Palestinians have an interest in political self-expression of some kind.

"A peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem must take into account the reasonable interests of all the people in the area, including both the people in existing states and the Palestinians. The U.S. objective is to help achieve peaceful coexistence among all the peoples in the area over time because we believe that is the best way to assure their well-being and happiness."

By way of conclusion, the American diplomatic document - which is, as far as we know, the first such document the U.S. administration ever gave to Arafat - states: "Exactly how Palestinian interests reach an accommodation with those of others in the area is best decided by negotiation. If the Palestinians are prepared to participate in a settlement by negotiation, the U.S. would be pleased to hear their ideas. The objective of overthrowing existing governments by force, however, does not seem to be the most promising way."

The treachery inherent in intelligence ties is also reflected in another major preoccupation of Helms': the concern for the stability of the Persian Gulf in general, and of the regime in Saudi Arabia in particular. He urged Washington to practice emergency scenarios in case the House of Saud should be brought down by a military coup or through outside intervention. One scenario, dated to September 1973, pondered the possibility of helping young, pro-American Saudi princes to become leaders with Iranian and Jordanian help. If Syria threatened Jordan then, Israel would push it back - just like in Black September of 1970, from which Salameh's organization got its name, and after which the PLO's center of gravity was shifted to Lebanon. Iran, too, was an important arena during the 1973 war, whether as an oil producer that made a tidy profit from the drop in production and rising prices, as a means of relaying information between Washington and Cairo, or as a sponsor, along with Israel, of Kurdish activity against Iraq. The Kurds feared - and rightly so - that the Americans and Iranians would abandon them for an Iran-Iraq deal. When Israel, deeply concerned over the Iraqi forces sent to help Syria on the northern front, asked the Kurds to open another front against Iraq, it was the Americans and the Iranians who persuaded them not to do so.

"16 October 1973. To: Ambassador Helms. From: Henry Kissinger. Thank you for timely and helpful response. We concur in your and shah's judgment and are sending following reply to [Mullah Mustafa] Barzani: 'We do not, repeat not, consider it advisable for you to undertake the offensive military action that the Israelis have suggested to you.'"

The scope of the action was not noted, but Asadollah Alam, minister of the Shah's royal court, wrote in his journal (which was published in the West in 1992) that Israel pushed the Kurds to move out of their mountain regions and embark on a large-scale offensive.

Since the U.S. did not have an embassy in Egypt after the Six-Day War, Sadat was looking for channels to Nixon; the Shah was one of them. On the second day of the 1973 war, toward midnight on October 7, Helms was summoned to the Iranian prime minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, who read him a cable that Sadat had sent to the Shah as a message for Nixon, conveyed through the Iranian ambassador to Cairo only a few hours earlier: "If Israel will evacuate all the territories occupied since June 5, 1967, Egypt will be ready to negotiate sincerely to place these territories under the control of the United Nations, or under the control of the four big powers, or under some other international control to be agreed. As for Sharm ash Sheikh [sic], Egypt is prepared to accept international supervision of freedom of navigation through gulf of Agaba [sic] after Israeli withdrawal. Sadat wants Shah to explain forgoing to President Nixon so that casualties may be stopped as soon as possible."

Helms deemed the reported offer implausible and was not satisfied until he "asked Hoveyda and his bilingual assistant to translate the cable for me three times," from Persian to English. The war, as we know, ended only two and a half weeks later, on October 24, and without any such accord.

THIRTY YEARS LATER- LESSONS OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR

The Globe and Mail, Shira Herzog 6 October 2003

Thirty years ago, on Judaism's holiest day, Israel faced its worst security nightmare when Syrian and Egyptian troops overran Israeli lines in the Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula. Within three days, the country feared for its very survival. Two weeks and thousands of casualties later, Israeli troops were poised to capture Damascus and invade Egypt. In Israel's consciousness, the legendary Yom Kippur War demonstrated both the country's vulnerability and military superiority. Today, the lessons of that formative event are more relevant than ever. None of this can be understood without some context. In June, 1967, Israel's lightning victory over the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan had left it holding the Sinai and the Golan, along with the West Bank (previously held by Jordan), and the Gaza Strip (previously held by Egypt). For many Israelis, the extent of the territory captured provided the strategic depth that had eluded the country 19 years earlier in Israel's war of independence. Most importantly, many Israelis believed that their '67 victory showed their invincibility — something that would deter Arab leaders from future military moves.

The product of this attitude was a colossal intelligence blunder. First, the Israeli leadership minimized then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's overtures for a negotiated settlement. Then, it dismissed evidence of Cairo's war plans. In later years, Israelis would dub this national blind spot "the conception." It gave birth to the 1973 war.

That war's aftershock reverberated deep and hard in Israel. An independent commission of inquiry blamed the country's unpreparedness on the military, but the public's loss of confidence in its political leadership forced Golda Meir to resign as Prime Minister. Three years later, Menachem Begin was elected in a profound political upheaval that unseated the formerly dominant Labour Party. Shortly after, in November 1977, President Sadat made a historic visit to Jerusalem that led to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

These seismic changes reflected the dialectical outcome of the 1973 war. Israelis never felt more vulnerable than in its early days, and never stronger than at its conclusion. That paradoxical combination led to the pragmatic conclusion that political accommodation with a neighbour offered a better guarantee of security than occupying disputed territories, and that even a peace amounting to little more than non-belligerency was better than any kind of war.

Anwar Sadat paid with his life for making peace with Israel. Not surprisingly, other Arab leaders declined to follow in his footsteps. But domestic Israeli politics were another reason

that peace with Egypt wasn't expanded. The rise to power of Menachem Begin, a result of Israelis' insecurity since the '73 war, dramatically reshaped the debate in Israel over the country's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The new Prime Minister was ideologically wedded to the notion of ancient Jewish sovereignty over the entire area west of the Jordan River.

Although Mr. Begin had agreed in his peace settlement with Egypt to implement an autonomy plan for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, he chose to delay the plan's implementation so he could establish a permanent Israeli foothold in the occupied territories. He and his successor, Yitzhak Shamir, institutionalized the fledgling Jewish settlement drive that had been tolerated by earlier Labour governments and dotted the landscape of the West Bank with scores of Israeli settlements located among Palestinian towns and villages.

Mr. Begin and Mr. Shamir believed that a benign occupation could pacify the Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza into accepting what the Israeli leaders hoped would become an irreversible reality. The 1987-1992 Palestinian uprising (or Intifada) proved them wrong. Faced with an indigenous struggle, Israelis could no longer deny the existence of a distinct Palestinian nationalism and their own role as occupiers.

Ultimately, the Intifada led to the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. But the failure of that peace process and the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising starting in 2000 reinforced Israelis' latent, ever-present insecurity.

Here's where the analogy to 1973 is important. Ariel Sharon's government also believes in a "conception" — the myth of Israel's ability to defeat the Palestinian national will militarily. The lesson of 1973 is that while time has certainly not been on the Palestinian side, neither is it necessarily on Israel's. In 1973, the belief that Egypt would not attack Israel resulted in a tragic outcome. Today, the belief that time will inevitably bend the Palestinian national will is folly. Meanwhile, Israel is paying an enormous economic and social price for its continued presence in the West Bank and Gaza, and unless it disengages from these areas, the high Palestinian birth rate will, before long, make Jews a minority in the land they occupy.

Therefore, even if the Palestinian leadership does nothing to contain the murderous terrorism of extremist factions, Israelis have to face tough questions about their own future.

But the 1973 war provides another important lesson. Social and political forces unleashed by that war led to sober soul-searching, a more open media and vigorous internal debate, and greater tolerance of dissenting voices. The post-1973 generation of Israelis easily punishes its leaders at the polls and appreciates the role of civil society organizations freed of political constraints.

As in 1973, when Israelis were bolstered by their ability to overcome an unprecedented military onslaught, their resilience in the face of thousands of terrorist attacks over the past three years is a source of national strength and confidence. That confidence now needs to be translated into courageous actions that will secure their country's future

A WATERSHED WAR

By Dov Tamari

"Zman Emet" ("The Yom Kippur War - Moment of Truth") by Ronen Bergman and Gil Meltzer, Yedioth Ahronoth Books, Sifrei Hemed, 527 pages, NIS 98

"The story of the Yom Kippur War is considered 'problematic'; without an absolute victory, without a special physical site that embodies the memory of the battle, without a leader who rose above the disagreement, a war devoid of 'permanent' territorial achievements, almost without songs in its memory or streets named after it, and to a large extent unjustified. A war that cannot speak for itself and remind the public of itself is in special need of verbal expression, so that it will not be forgotten."

These apt words were written by Gideon Avital, a master's student in a seminar that I teach at Tel Aviv University. He called his paper "The Representation of the Yom Kippur War and its Construction in the Israeli Collective Memory."

He added: "There is attention in the collective memory to the 1973 war as a subject in and of itself, but above all its memory serves as a means, a tool in the hands of public figures and academics, politicians and teachers - for crystallizing identity or as part of a system of

arguments and precedents in the service of a debate on current events. Therefore, considerable effort is invested in the construction of the memory, on the part of everyone who ultimately desires to be built up by it. Memorial discourse, then, is a kind of protracted journey in time, forward and backward: a debate that takes place in the present, relates to the past and is nourished by it, while looking to the future."

These observations provide a context for the many reports in the media and the many books that were published on the 30th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War a few months ago, among them "Moment of Truth," which describes the battles on the Egyptian front from the beginning of the war to its end, and the hesitant beginnings of the military reckoning of conscience in its aftermath. The motive for writing the book, according to the authors, was that the Yom Kippur War is "the bloodiest and most painful wound in the history of the State of Israel," and a war "that cut the history of the young state in two, like a watershed between the age of innocence and everything that happened thereafter." Although it should be noted that the watershed extends through 1967 and that it is impossible to understand the 1973 war without understanding the one that preceded it, the way in which we have interpreted the first war led to the sinful conception of the second.

The book posits a dense network of coordinates, by length, width and depth, from defense minister Moshe Dayan, chief of staff David Elazar, GOCs of commands and division commanders to brigade commanders, battalion commanders and combat soldiers of all kinds, and is based on the personal experiences of people who held official positions and fighters who experienced the events of the war.

The authors say that the aim of the book is to reveal the secrets that were kept from us for 30 years. In Israel, it is customary for documents and papers on wars and battles that serve as the basis for historical research to be kept sequestered in archives for a period of three decades - or, more precisely: until those in power with the authority to decide determine that the time has come to open them, or that it is necessary to keep them closed, or to leak the material. The Israel Defense Forces have no tradition like that of veteran armies of publishing an "official history of the war." The studies by its history department are aimed primarily at internal use by the army, and it is hard to call these "official histories."

Treasure as trigger

Apparently the trigger for writing the book was the treasure that came into the writers' hands in the form of recordings of internal conversations and conversations over the radio frequencies of the war room of the Southern Command during the Yom Kippur War, which go straight to the guts of a military machine at war. In addition to the recordings, the writers apparently had at their disposal studies by the IDF's history department, original maps and other documents and, of course, interviews with participants in the battles on the Egyptian front, from major generals to fighters in tanks, planes and outposts, and prisoners who returned from Egyptian captivity.

The authors were surprised to discover how much interesting material was in private hands, but this phenomenon is well-known in an army that is made up largely of reserve soldiers, who often take home valuable materials at the end of their stint of duty without accounting for them to anyone - and without anyone demanding that they do so. A "people's army" indeed.

Hence the documentary infrastructure for the book is very rich, and the writers use it plentifully. The interpretation of the material is another matter altogether. Upon reading the book, the question arises of to which genre it belongs. Ostensibly, it is a historical study, but it is written by two journalists who publish many articles and investigative reports.

Accepted scientific and systematic historical research sticks to strict rules, both methodological and formal, in the areas of description and interpretation. The journalistic genre is far freer, its interpretation is daring and its methodology is flexible, sometimes wildly so. The journalist is influenced by his field of endeavor: Sensation has value, as does a secret that has been hidden and is now revealed. The form of news has vitality, as does the primacy and the revelation. Members of the academic community are likely to think that scientific writing has an advantage over the journalistic genre, but in the Israeli reality this is not the way things are. The public's perception of Israel's wars is determined far more by books written by journalists than by books written by researchers inside the military establishment or at the universities.

The perception of the Six-Day War and the images of it were shaped to a considerable extent by the book published, in Hebrew immediately after it, "The Tanks of Tammuz" by Shabtai Teveth, who was a journalist at the time. The books by Eitan Haber and Ze'ev Schiff after the Yom Kippur War, and by Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari after the campaign in Lebanon in 1982, are well-remembered, along with many others. Books like these, which come out shortly after the end of a war, when there is still great curiosity and the tension has not yet eased, influence the perception and memory of the war far more than a learned study that is published many years after the fact.

The question is, of course, what interests us in reading these books: the facts and the truth, or the book's later influence on the consciousness of the individual and the society after the war? I myself am engaged in the area of historical research, but I am aware of this phenomenon of journalistic writing about war, which is invaluable. For example, the best book about Malaya's war between 1948 and 1958 to free itself of the yoke of British colonialism, "The War of the Running Dogs," was written by journalist Noel Barber.

The journalistic imprint on "Moment of Truth" is reflected in the descriptions by the public figures who participated in directing the battles in the south. A post-1973 journalist has no compunctions about getting under the skin of a government minister, a chief of staff or a major general, who, contrary to what is generally thought, bore a psychological and physical burden during the war, to the point of collapse.

Therefore the title "Moment of Truth" is loaded. The book was written a long time after the war, and it claims to be the truth. But truths were also there immediately after the war and during the following years; some of them have been published and some of them have been concealed. Now there is an additional truth, and there is no doubt that it is not the last, as the past always changes because we change, and the concepts through which we regard the past also change.

Do we really know what happened there? The writers make no pretense of this, for two good reasons: They are dealing only with the Egyptian front, and they know that there is still a lot of material out there. Presumably they also realize that their new interpretation is not the last, and others will come along with additional truths.

The question that arises from the book is how we understand and assess a war that we have been through. A weighty question. In the case of the Yom Kippur War, it would appear that the determining yardsticks were and remain to this day the Sinai Campaign and the Six-Day War. For reasons that cannot be probed here, those were easy wars, short and with few losses. It appeared to Israeli society that this could be a permanent arrangement. The horrible War of Independence was forgotten, or at most served as a point of reference for the huge improvement in the IDF over very few years.

Anyone who looks at the wars of the 20th century will reach the conclusion that the Yom Kippur War is similar to the industrialized wars, like World War II, the Korean War, the wars between India and Pakistan and others. In these major wars an infantry or tank brigade is liable to be destroyed and disappear within a few hours, and a battalion within one hour. In these wars a battalion is sent on a mission that is considered essential, in the knowledge that the chances of its survival are zero, but it is the subjective necessity that prevails. In the Vietnam War, the United States lost 6,000 helicopters. The superimposition of the images of the Sinai Campaign and the Six-Day War onto the Yom Kippur War made it insufferable to the Israeli mind that was familiar with victories - some of them, incidentally, imaginary.

Hence the continuing Israeli paradox. War is the logic that has been shaping Israeli society for 55 years now. War as a phenomenon takes up an exceptional expanse in Israeli society. For a number of decades, and especially during the years between the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, war established itself as the supreme concept that embraced Israeli society and penetrated most areas of life, for the most part as a positive value, as a basic Israeli experience and as part of the common Israeli experience. It was convenient for us to imagine to ourselves that war is a one-dimensional, brief phenomenon, relatively easy and with a charge that stimulates and encourages. Eighteen years of being in Lebanon and the years of the current intifada, of which the end is not in sight, demonstrate that there are no more easy wars and that those of 1956 and 1967 were exceptional.

Another question that the book can arouse in the reader, intentionally or not on the part of the authors, is whether the book is a description of the war or of its image. It would seem that despite the authentic documents, the book presents an image of the war. The interviewees tell their story. Sometimes this is a story that was told 30 years ago and sometimes only during the past year. There is no doubt that most of the stories have been modified by experience over the years, and therefore these are not facts, but experiences. Memory develops over time and the stronger the experience - the stronger the memory becomes, and it also changes.

Two sweeping images that are prevalent among the public today are worth mentioning. The one: The leadership blundered badly and the fighters saved the war and brought about victory. The top brass was drunk with victory after 1967, and the results of this arrogance and complacency were reflected in the way the war began. I suspect that this is too convenient a description, and even a dangerous one. I knew some of the major generals of that period. Many of them were intelligent officers who worked hard and advanced the IDF in essential areas during the years between 1967 and 1973. The problem lay, more than anywhere else, in the Israeli thinking - diplomatic, military and social - during the six years between the war in which a brilliant military victory was achieved, and the war that had grave military results.

The entire Israeli mindset at the time, the concepts of "not a single inch," "defensible border," "strategic depth" and the demand for borders that are secure, recognized, agreed-upon and ... imposed, filled the Israeli experience. True, the top echelons of the IDF supported all these ideas, but they filled the Israeli consciousness in its entirety in a game of mirrors between the political leadership and Israeli society. The fact that we finished the war in better shape than we were in when it started has to be credited both to the fighters and to the senior command. Without the military leadership of the time, we would have emerged from the war in far worse shape. The decisions about the counterattack in the Golan Heights, its onset at the right time, at a moment when it looked as though there was no potential for defeating Syria, going for a cease-fire on the Egyptian front, and the decision to cross the Suez Canal - all these were successful and correct, despite "the wars of the generals."

The second image is of those wars of the generals, of which the book is full. But there is no war without wars between the generals and without wars between the military and the civilian leaderships. This is a phenomenon that is known in most wars everywhere and is also not absent from our own wars. During the War of Independence, David Ben-Gurion made considerable efforts to depose excellent field commanders from their positions, and there was also the affair of the huge quarrel during the Sinai Campaign between chief of staff Moshe Dayan and the GOC Southern Command, Assaf Simhoni, which ended only with the latter's death in an accident. This phenomenon occurs in nearly every war in the world.

The Yom Kippur War that is reflected in "Moment of Truth" is only one image - though a very interesting one - out of a plethora of images and truths. The book ends with a categorical statement: "There is no one we can trust." This is a harsh statement that leads nowhere. The reader should ask himself a few questions that are not asked in the book: What happened to Israeli thinking between 1967 and 1973? It is, after all, fairly clear that the concepts that prevailed in Israeli society at that time are what obliged Egypt and Syria to embark on a war, in which they fought for the first time to liberate their territory from an occupier. The war was perceived as a shock, an earthquake, a shattering of myths and a trauma that to this day are a living memory.

What has shaped the traumatic memory during the 30 years that have elapsed? Sadly, it seems that the traumatic memory has led Israel almost to the place where it was between 1967 and 1973. Evidence of this is the Lebanon War, which was aimed at imposing a new order in a neighboring country by means of military might, and Israel's conduct in the matter of the Palestinians and Syria, which is hardly different from the conduct that preceded 1973, apart from the fact that the Arab forces are not as strong as they were in 1973. Are we not suffering from blindness with regard to processes in the region that are shaping a difficult future?

In every discussion, symposium and book about the Yom Kippur War, the question invariably arises of "Who won?" - as the Israeli image of war requires a victory. The question, of course, is what the victory needs to set right in our consciousness, and on this, the student whom I cited at the beginning of this review said: "A feeling of victory in a war makes it easier to justify its victims and to carry its burden; victory also makes it possible to overcome with less

pain the mistakes and the hitches that exact a price in war - usually a very heavy price. The recognition of victory strengthens the opinion that the use of force was a correct move. It also leads to the expectation that the losing side will behave as is expected from the side that does not have the upper hand.

"Let us not forget: Victory usually has a great many fathers. Each of them expects reward and recognition. However, a sense of defeat necessitates the finding of guilty parties, demands apology and harms the national self-image. From the declaration 'We won,' it would seem that the obvious conclusion is that the leadership fulfilled the expectations from it and that it is therefore worthy of future trust. Victory testifies to inherent superiority, ingenuity and ability, not to mention inherent qualities. And, in general, there is the well-known argument that Israel has no alternative: It must win, for if it does not - a holocaust will ensue. Thus it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of victory. And if the victory is somewhat dubious - at least [there should be] the consciousness and image of victory. And if not the conviction and recognition of victory - at least the declaration that we have won. And if we declare this again and again - perhaps we shall also believe it."

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THE YOM KIPPUR WAR: THE IDF VERSION

By Amir Oren Sunday, September 15, 2002 Haaretz

Ariel Sharon has a vested interest in determining what we know about what really happened in 1973.



1973: From left, Haim Bar-Lev, Yigal Yadin, Ephraim Katzir, Avner Shalev (the head of the chief of staff's bureau) and David Elazar.

The sticker on the inside cover of "The History of the Yom Kippur War," published by the History Department of the Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) General Staff, will bring tears to your eyes - it's that funny; the truth is that it's not so much a publication as it is a public execution.

"History," the sticker preaches. "If you don't read, you won't know! If you don't know, you won't learn! If you don't learn, you will make mistakes! Make mistakes!" -and here the exclamation marks trail off into an ellipsis. Paste in the sticker and then lock the book in the cabinet, lest someone read, know, learn and, heaven forbid, make no mistakes.

The History Department is part of the doctrine and guidance division, which is subordinate to the chief of the General Staff's Operations Branch. The chief, Major General Dan Harel, last week took pride in declaring that he is the one who is bodily blocking the dissemination of the book about the Yom Kippur War. The chief of staff, Moshe Ya'alon, who has been in office for two months without showing a sign of change from the path followed by his predecessor, Shaul Mofaz, did not intervene.

Ya'alon is a prominent member of the group of combat soldiers, or noncoms, or junior officers who were so rattled by the Yom Kippur War of 1973 that they decided to join the career army and help prevent a recurrence of such disasters; a personal decision, but cumulatively that of a generation, that is shared by Ya'alon's deputy and the commanders of the Navy and the Air Force, the head of Central Command and the directors of the Planning Branch and Military Intelligence.

One might have expected that Ya'alon would do what he could to inculcate knowledge of the past as one of the elements for understanding the military, political, public and technological framework in which the IDF must perform its tasks now and in the future.

Military history is too important to be left in the hands of the military's historians, but in Israel they get preference, and in many ways even exclusivity, because they are the ones with access to the material - documents, transcripts, recordings, photographs and, if the government agrees, minutes of the discussions held by the political level. The army writes but the army also shelves, and no defense minister, government or Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is about to issue an order to give the public access to its rightful property: historical research.

The majority of Israel's citizens were born, grew up or immigrated here after the Yom Kippur War, which is now in time closer to the Second World than it is to the present. What people know about it is what those who were involved or their representatives have said, and they are committed to partial and private truth. Twenty-nine years have passed, years in which a new generation has emerged in the political and defense leadership, but there is as yet no authorized history of the war. Actually, there is, but it is missing in action or imprisoned without trial and without commutation of sentence in a military dungeon, hidden from the public eye.

Top secret

"The History of the Yom Kippur War, by a researcher of the IDF's History Department, Lieutenant Colonel Elhanan Oren, was printed in September 1992 and classified "secret." Six years later, the classification was lowered by one notch, to "confidential," and it would be no problem to declassify it altogether, as it is or at most with the deletion of a few words. The classification is not sacred. It lies in the eye of the beholder, and the beholder has vested interests. This is well exemplified in a new volume of documents, which are no longer secret, from the period of the Johnson administration in the United States, relating to data about the American nuclear disposition: the defense secretary at the time, Robert McNamara, agreed to make the data public, convened the Atomic Energy Commission as required to get official permission to lift the secrecy and reported to the president. Johnson, in the midst of his presidential campaign against the militant Barry Goldwater, was furious and revoked McNamara's decision. The defense minister, part of the political level but also an authoritative defense personage, thought as he did; the president, a politician but also the commander-in-chief, thought otherwise. It was possible to put forward arguments either way without those supporting publication being considered anti-American. That is the small but critical difference between state secrets and statesmen's secrets.

If Israel had special armament in 1973, there is barely any mention of it in the "History," though years ago Prof. Yuval Ne'eman related, in a public lecture delivered in New York, that Ivri surface-to-surface missiles were deployed as a threat to Syria. Other secrets also remain outside the two-volume work of slightly more than 700 pages that Elhanan Oren wrote; much remains in the dozen volumes compiled by another researcher, Shimon Golan, about the High Command post in the war - then prime minister Golda Meir, defense minister Moshe Dayan, cabinet ministers Yigal Allon and Israel Galili, chief of staff David Elazar and his deputy Israel Tal, director of Military Intelligence Eli Zeira, Air Force commander Benny Peled and their colleagues - in its most difficult moments.

After the report published by the Agranat Commission (the state commission of inquiry that examined the opening stages of the war, chaired by the president of the Supreme Court, Moshe Agranat) and its continuations - the memoirs of Meir and Dayan, the estate of Elazar, the books by and against Zeira, the works by two divisional commanders in Sinai, Ariel Sharon and Avraham Adan, along with numberless articles and interviews - what is there left to relate that is not already known? Not much, though in one sense very much: to decide between the conflicting versions of events. A court, too, which makes its judgment on the basis of the evidence before it, does not usually provide revelations; its strength lies in clarifying which of the competing truths is more convincing. The History Department, which is not a side to the dispute, is armed only with the pretension to know and the authority to decide, poses a threat to those involved in the blood battle over the facts and their meaning - and it is they, and above all one of them, who are putting the fear of God into the successive chiefs of staff of the IDF and the generals, and those who want to achieve those ranks.

The war over the true version of what happened in October 1973 has been fought on several fronts, some contiguous, others separate: the military level against the political level and both

of them against the intelligence people, the General Staff against the Air Force, the chief of staff against the head of Southern Command, the Front Command against the divisions and the divisions among themselves. Military Intelligence swept the shame under the carpet. It was only after 20 years, at the initiative of the commander of the School of Intelligence, Ron Kitri, that they convened for the first time to discuss the events of 1973 and the insights that can be gleaned from them.

Although the chief of staff in 1973, David Elazar, is usually portrayed as an unfair victim of the events, which he was only in comparison to Meir and Dayan (and even that only for a few weeks, until their coerced resignations), he easily outmaneuvered Dayan and landed the first blow in the duel between them. Elazar gave Chaim Herzog (a retired major general who was later president of Israel), who had a grudge against Dayan, vital assistance, rare in terms of the access it provided to material and interviewees and transparent in its purpose, even though the Agranat Commission report recommended Elazar's ouster as chief of staff before Herzog's sympathetic book ("The War of Atonement") appeared. Then came counter-versions and counter-counter-versions.

Following Elazar's sudden death at the age of 51, in 1976 - Meir died two years later and Dayan three years after her - the veterans of the barren political contest (Allon vs. Dayan) mobilized to exalt the disgraced chief of staff, some in literature, some in the press and others in the history departments of the universities. The IDF History Department supports Elazar in his dispute with the head of Southern Command in October 1973, Shmuel Gonen-Gorodish, but is unsparing in its criticism of "Dado," the 1978 biography of Elazar by Hanoach Bartov, which has just been reissued in an expanded edition. The footnotes in the "History" are trenchant: Bartov is wrong in his assessment of Elazar's position, claiming that he was constantly pressing for an offensive in the north, but there is no doubt that before 9 P.M. he was inclined to remain in a defensive posture; Bartov's account does not note that the decision took form in the wake of the change in the chief of staff's evaluation; Bartov presents Elazar's remarks correctly but we should not accept his comment about Dayan's earlier reservations; Bartov downplays the pressure exerted by Elazar on October 12 to obtain a cease-fire soon.

The History Department avoids handing out grades to the Agranat Commission report - had it done so, it would have given it quite a high grade - making do with incidental remarks. "The Agranat Commission did not believe [one of the brigade commanders in connection with his advance to battle], did not understand his reports and drew an inference from this detail about everything he said. The research made it clear that the commission used a map coded to 1:50,000, whereas he [the brigade commander] used a map of 1:100,000 and pointed to a green signification of landmines to mark his position."

Agranat Commission

The Agranat Commission was asked to deal only with the preparations for the war and the war's first three days. The IDF History Department painted a far broader canvass, albeit with certain inhibitions: it did not survey political documentation, which could shed some light on the considerations of the leaders of the ruling party to avoid - this on the eve of the general elections, which were set for October 31 - moves that entailed tension that would contradict their boasting about deterring the Arabs; the archives from the 1950s and 1960s of Mapai and its successor, the Labor Alignment, include party discussions about the most secret subjects, such as the nuclear reactor at Dimona, and there is no reason to think that Golda, Galili, Dayan, Shimon Peres (who was also a cabinet minister in October 1973, albeit of junior level) and others abstained completely from analyzing the impact that a call-up of the reserves would have on the election campaign.

In the Dayan-Elazar sector, in the narrow sense, or the government versus the army in the broad sense, the History Department effectively adopts the wretched remark of the state president, Ephraim Katzir, that "we are all to blame" - along with the leadership, Katzir implicated the nation that follows its leaders innocently. No one at the highest level gets off scot-free, but neither is anyone denounced as being the chief culprit.

In the introduction to Oren's book, Benny Michelson, who was the head of the History Department at the time the study was completed, deals with the deterrence failure: the power of the Air Force and the maneuvering capability of the armored forces, which were supposed "to take the war to the enemy's capitals in every opening situation" quickly and potently, did

not dissuade the Egyptians from creating offensive, though weapons-intensive, alignments against planes and tanks. The intelligence warning "was late in coming" and the war opened with a surprise in all its dimensions - even commanders who were told that it would soon erupt did not easily internalize the meaning of this and continued to deploy for a "land grab" or a "day of battle," but not for a full-scale war.

Faults were found in the IDF's offensive operation conception, which neglected the defensive side; in relying on the conscript army; and in the considerations that underlay Golda Meir's decision not to launch a preemptive air strike.

On October 12, Michelson writes, "The government, in the wake of the chief of staff's proposal, considered acceding to the stoppage of the war, in conditions that were difficult for Israel, before the goal had been achieved in the Egyptian arena." The reasons for this were "first of all the data on the erosion of planes, as presented by the commander of the Air Force. Total reliance on air power is liable to lead to a reaction so fierce that it will give the leadership a feeling of helplessness." From the IDF's point of view, the History Department concludes, the war ended in a narrow victory, with "only the partial achievement of the war's goals" as they had been defined; from the point of view of the State of Israel, the failure lay in the fact that the war was not prevented and in losing it: the Arab states succeeded in forcing the IDF's withdrawal in the political settlements that came in the wake of the war and to achieve more than they would have had they not gone to war.

According to the authoritative data, the Egyptians held a bridgehead with a total area of some 1,400 square kilometers in the opening stage of the war. Israel was prepared, in terms of ammunition and spare parts, for 10 days of warfare (for 90 days in terms of fuel and food), but after 18 days of fighting the Egyptians had lost only one-seventh of the territory they had captured and still held about 1,200 square kilometers; the Israeli wedge inside Egypt was about 1,600 square kilometers. Between October 6 and October 14, 2,225 Israelis were killed, including more than 950 in defense (190 a day in the first five days); another 325 fell in the next five days, which centered on the offensive against the Golan Heights; 850 died in the operation to cross the Suez Canal and in the breakthrough into Egyptian and Syrian territory; and 100 in the last two days of fighting, between the two cease-fires. The other IDF casualties were: 405 seriously wounded, 1,430 moderately wounded, 5,500 lightly wounded: a third from shelling, nearly a third from antitank weapons, a 10th from air attacks, an eighth from light weapons fire. Some 300 Israelis were taken prisoner, 230 by the Egyptians.

Those are stinging statistics, and many families in Israel have not recovered from them, nor has the state itself, but the desire to close one's eyes to them cannot explain the concealment of the historical study. That reason has another name: Ariel Sharon.

Sharon was the commander of the 143rd Division. The study documents his violations of orders and his friction - to the point where fruitless discussions to remove him took place - with his superior officer and successor as head of Southern Command, Shmuel Gonen; with the chief of staff, David Elazar; with the Southern Front commander who was appointed above the faltering Gonen, Haim Bar-Lev, a cabinet minister who was the political rival of the progenitor of the Likud, Sharon. All this is well-known, and it's possible that Sharon is still proud of his behavior, but the researchers formed the impression that the glory-hungry commander failed to read the tactical battle correctly, particularly between October 9th and 12th. His rash demand to cross the canal, on which his pride as savior is based, was

PRIME TIME, BY DEFAULT

By Amnon Barzilai Ha'aretz Vendredi 10 10 2003

In February 1969, when Golda Meir arrived at the Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem after learning about the death of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, the argument was at its height. The members of the national unity government, who were huddled in one of the guest rooms in the building, could not agree on where to hold the state internment ceremony. Eshkol did not leave a will, and no formal procedure existed as yet concerning the burial of a prime minister. Some of the ministers, mainly the representatives of the kibbutzim, urged that Eshkol, who was one of the founders of Kibbutz Deganya, be buried in the kibbutz cemetery, where his first two wives were also buried. Others argued that he should be interred on Mount

Herzl, in Jerusalem, in the section reserved for Israel's great leaders. The widow, Miriam Eshkol, did not intervene in the debate. She accompanied Golda Meir, who went up to the second floor in order to part from the dead prime minister, whose body still lay on his bed. When Meir returned to the guest room, she sat down on the sofa, lit a cigarette and watched the unfolding events quietly. The two longtime adversaries, Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon, were at loggerheads even on the subject of the burial of a prime minister. Those who objected to Eshkol's internment at Deganya, on Lake Kinneret, pointed out that the Jordanian Army had of late been shelling the communities of the Jordan Valley. To bring thousands of people to a funeral there would be a security risk, they warned. "And then the following happened," relates Aryeh (Lova) Eliav, who was the deputy minister of absorption in the Eshkol government. "One after another, the ministers sat down on the sofa, to Golda's right and left, including Dayan, Allon, Pinhas Sapir and Menachem Begin, who was a minister in the national unity government, and put the two positions to her, for and against. Suddenly Golda was involved in the affair, asking what this minister and that minister thought, and I said to myself: Look at that, she is going to make a decision concerning the argument. She said: 'I think Eshkol should be buried in Jerusalem.' And so it was. And I thought to myself: This is the next prime minister of Israel." Eshkol, Israel's third prime minister, died on February 26, 1969. About a month later, after the mourning period, the Labor Party bureau met to discuss the question of succession. Eliav asked for the floor first. He stood himself in front of the gathering, turned to Golda Meir, and said, "Golda, I propose that you be our candidate for prime minister. Because you are absolutely determined to be prime minister. You want it with all your heart and all your soul." Yossi Sarid, the youngest of the participants in the meeting, listened in astonishment. Sarid: "Lova's remarks were like a hand grenade that was tossed into the middle of the room. What was he talking about Golda wanting it? Did she want anything at all? How could it be - it was contrary to the party culture to want things. Only someone who had lost his marbles could say something like that. Lova was actually making a very serious accusation against Golda. At that time no one wanted anything, you know. There were no ambitions and everything was done at the behest of the movement. And in fact her face turned red with anger and she asked, 'Do I want something?' And she answered her own question: 'I don't want anything.' Then everyone leaped up and they all started to say that it was a good idea. That was Golda's coronation assembly. She, of course, said she would take the job because she had no choice. To this day I don't know whether Lova's comment that Golda should be prime minister was made out of naivete or cruel sarcasm." Eliav says he actually thought that Meir was fit for the position of prime minister. This scene, to which only a handful of senior people in the Labor Party were privy, had its origins behind the ailing Eshkol's back. Sarid: "From 1967 to 1969 I was a student in New York. In the winter of 1968, my good friend Pinhas Sapir, the finance minister, came for a visit. He said he wanted to tell me a secret. This is what he said: 'Eshkol is a dying man and his end is very close.' I asked him whether it was already known who would succeed him. 'Golda,' Sapir said. "I almost fell off the chair. Not Dayan, not Allon, not Abba Eban. Why Golda? She had no support in the party, and she was disliked and even hated by the public. Sapir explained to me that there was no choice. Any other choice would spark an all-out war within the party." Sapir managed to put together this whole complex and sensitive move before sharing the secret with Sarid. In his book "The Price of Unity," Dr. Yossi Beilin writes that the secret understandings were arrived at around the fall of 1968, some four or five months before Eshkol's death. Sapir visited Golda Meir, who was then in a rest home in Switzerland. He analyzed for her the delicate situation that existed in the party since the unification with Ahdut Ha'avoda and Rafi. In his view, he told her, she was the only suitable candidate to lead the party and the country. Without mentioning the feelers that had been put out before Eshkol's death, Meir describes her hesitations in her autobiography, "My Life": "As for me, I couldn't make up my mind. On the one hand, I realized that, unless I agreed, there would inevitably be a tremendous tug-of-war between Dayan and Allon, which was one thing that Israel didn't need then ... On the other hand, I honestly didn't want the responsibility, the stress and strain of being prime minister."

Two successful missions

The appointment of Meir, who was then 71, as prime minister, was a default choice. Since she was one of the founding generation who were still active, she was the only agreed-upon candidate who could ensure the unity of the Labor Party, which had officially been established a year earlier. She would also be able to prevent an internal war of succession in the party, which was liable to bring about its disintegration. "But she was the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time," says her biographer, Dr. Meron Medzini. When she took over as prime minister, Meir was the person with the richest public and political experience in the Labor Party's leadership. She was Israel's first envoy to Russia, and from 1949 to 1965 had been a member of the governments of David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett and Levi Eshkol, until resigning voluntarily in 1965, when she held the post of foreign minister. Even before Israel's establishment, she had fulfilled two missions that placed her in the national leadership: her appointment as head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency and her Zionist activity among American Jewry. Shortly before the War of Independence, Ben-Gurion was about to make a visit to the United States in order to raise funds for the creation of an army. Meir told him that he was irreplaceable in the country at that moment, whereas she was capable of doing what he had intended to do in the U.S. Ben-Gurion insisted on going, but the Mapai Central Committee decided in Meir's favor (Mapai was the forerunner of the Labor Party). Meir left to conduct a fundraising mission among the Jewish communities of the U.S. with a few dollars in her pocket and returned with \$50 million. Years later, Ben-Gurion said: "One day, when the history [of Israel's creation] is written, it will be said that it was a Jewish woman who obtained the money that made the state's establishment possible." On the eve of the War of Independence in 1948, Ben-Gurion sent her to meet with King Abdullah of Jordan, in an attempt to persuade him to stay out of the war. She was unsuccessful. Moshe Dayan related afterward that when Abdullah was told of Meir's appointment as minister to Moscow, he responded by saying, "Halik huna, halik huna" ("Leave her there, leave her there"). Years later, Sapir had to remove one obstacle before he could complete his mission to get Meir appointed prime minister. The foreign minister, Abba Eban, put it to Sapir that he (Eban) deserved to succeed Eshkol. As Eban told Beilin, Sapir reassured him by saying that Meir's appointment was not the final word: "Golda is sick - we are talking about a period of a year in order to block Dayan and Allon." Eban was not satisfied. He told Allon that he would support him if he agreed to contest the premiership. Allon did not take the bait and told Eban he would back Meir. Medzini writes that when Meir heard about Eban's abortive attempt to become prime minister, she retorted, "Of what country, I wonder?" The rumors about the intrigues that were going on behind his back as he struggled with his serious illness reached the prime minister. "In his last days," Medzini writes, "Eshkol grumbled to himself in juicy Yiddish about the klatfeh that was waiting for him to die."

Most popular women

On March 7, 1969, the Labor Party Central Committee voted for Meir's candidacy. Seventy members were in favor, no one was against. The members of the Rafi faction, including Moshe Dayan, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Navon (later Israel's fifth president), abstained. On March 17, Meir presented her government to the Knesset and won the confidence of all the parties that had constituted the national unity government. A public opinion poll that was conducted a few months before Meir became prime minister found that only 3 percent supported her for that position. She ranked well behind Dayan, Allon and Eban. Two months after she became prime minister, she had the support of 80 percent of the public. In that year, Meir was numbered among the 10 most popular women in the world, along with Queen Elizabeth II, Jacqueline Onassis-Kennedy and Indira Gandhi. In her autobiography, Golda Meir wrote: "I had never planned to be prime minister; I had never planned any position, in fact ... I became prime minister because that was how it was, in the same way that my milkman became an officer in command of an outpost on Mount Hermon. Neither of us had any particular relish for the job, but we both did it as well as we could."

Friends and lovers

In the summer of 1968, Zalman Shazar's term as president of Israel was about to end. There was public criticism of him for not having spent enough time visiting those wounded in the Six-Day War. The Knesset Labor Party faction convened to decide whether to extend his tenure or to propose another candidate. MK Shulamit Aloni called out from her seat: "I nominate Golda for president." A huge ruckus broke out in the faction. Golda Meir, in her capacity as party secretary-general, chaired the discussion and scolded Aloni: "How dare you hurt Shazar in order to bounce me upward!" Next to Aloni sat Devora Netzer, who kept pinching her neighbor in the thigh. Aloni tried to concentrate despite the pinches and replied: "In the State of Israel, if a woman is president, that is a huge achievement for feminism." The large majority, led by Meir, did not relate seriously to Aloni's comment. "Only then I turned my attention to the pinching and I asked Devora: 'Why are you pinching me all the time?' And she said to me: 'Didn't you know that Shazar was Golda's lover?' And I hadn't known." In his biography of Golda Meir, Meron Medzini writes that in 1922, she was sent as the representative of Kibbutz Merhavia, of which she was a member (along with her husband Morris) to the conference of the kibbutz movement at Deganya. There for the first time she met the heads of the Labor Movement, among them David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson. The third man in the leadership group was David Remez, one of the founders of the Histadrut. It was at the conference at Deganya that the two great love affairs of her life had their beginnings. There, relates Medzini, Golda Meir met Shazar, a gifted writer and stirring orator who influenced her. "In those days," writes the biographer, she was "ripe for the picking and open to taking in impressions and influences. Eventually Golda and Shazar became lovers." But the big love story that grew out of that conference developed between Meir and David Remez. Medzini writes: "Remez ... more than anyone else played a key role in shaping Golda Meir's character, path and life ... He became her teacher and guide, and afterward a romantic connection developed between them that lasted for many years." Golda Meir's son, cellist Menachem Meir, says his mother had a deep connection to Remez and also to Shazar. He says that she also had close personal, but not romantic, friendships with Zalman Aran, a member of Knesset and Mapai secretary-general, and Yaakov Hazan, a leader of the more left-wing labor Zionist movement Mapam. The connection with Hazan grew stronger in later years following the establishment of the Alignment between her Mapai party and his party, Mapam.

The Panther porridge

Golda Meir's comment about the Israeli Black Panthers - "They aren't nice" - was made at a convention of the World Organization of Immigrants from North Africa. The meeting was held at Beit Agron in Jerusalem, following the Mimouna celebrations at the end of Passover, 1971, in the shadow of the Panthers' riots. The prime minister had been invited to address the convention even before the Panthers had entered the public consciousness. Speaking before Meir, Shaul Ben-Simhon, one of the heads of the organization, described the contacts he had with Panther leaders in prison after they had been arrested following the violent demonstrations, and his attempts to come up with a joint formula. "In order to soften the atmosphere and alleviate the tension, I also said that all in all, they were nice fellows," recalls Ben-Simhon. "And then Golda got up and said, among other things, 'People who torch cars and throw Molotov cocktails - they aren't nice fellows.'" Says Moshe Zanbar, formerly the governor of the Bank of Israel and, before that, the person in charge of state income, and Pinchas Sapir's closest financial adviser: "Golda did not understand the social processes in the country. She did not understand the behavior of the youngsters of North African origin whose parents had immigrated to Israel from Morocco in the 1950s." From 1949 to 1955 Meir was labor minister. She was the second minister to hold the post, but was in fact responsible for the establishment and organization of the ministry. Her most important contribution was initiating social legislation, most notably the establishment of the National Insurance Institute. Less successful was her initiative to provide work to the new immigrants. Zanbar: "The intention was perhaps good. She said it didn't matter what the immigrants did, as long as they worked. That was the ideology at the time. That they should not get money for nothing. That they should get money for work. But their children grew up, some of them joined the Panthers, and they remembered that their fathers had been made hewers of wood

and drawers of water. And Golda, who had meanwhile become prime minister, ate the porridge she herself had cooked." The construction work, the paving of roads and the building of the fortifications along the Suez Canal after the Six-Day War created a new class of nouveaux riches. "The security concept necessitated fast action," Zanbar recalls. "And when people work under the pressure of time, everything costs more. The big contractors did not agree to come. They did not want to take the risk. Others came. And they got rich." With the growth in the national product, the workers' organizations began to demand wage increases. Zanbar: "I told Sapir that we needed to have strong people at the head of the Histadrut labor federation and the employers' organizations, so that we at the treasury would have someone to deal with. I told him that there had to be a new secretary at the Histadrut, like (Yitzhak) Ben-Aharon. Sapir got alarmed. He said to me: 'You're crazy. He can't control his tongue. He has the character of a communist.' But once he calmed down he told me to go to Golda and suggest it to her. She also took fright. She said, 'Why Ben-Aharon? After all, he's from Ahdut Ha'avoda' [another labor Zionist party]. But they accepted my idea. And in the end, they were right, not I: Ben-Aharon made a strong Histadrut, but that didn't help. The ferment increased. It was more important for Ben-Aharon to please the workers."

Her narrow world

Golda Meir brought back to the government and the leadership of the Labor Party the authoritativeness and the charisma that had been lacking in the personality of her predecessor, Levi Eshkol. "I sat in the bureau, with the titans of the generation, and I was all of 26," relates Dr. Yoram Peri of Tel Aviv University, who served at the time as party spokesman, "and I see that everyone is paralyzed, not daring to say a word. They are afraid of her glance. They don't open their mouths, not even Pinchas Sapir." When Aryeh (Lova) Eliav charged the foreign minister, Abba Eban, of not standing up for his opinions in the government, Eban answered: "You're right, but we're all under Golda's blanket." Amos Oz experienced this feeling when he visited her home together with a group of writers and poets. "The housekeeper wasn't there and Golda served us the coffee and cookies. She went around the circle of guests. I felt terrible. I had feelings of guilt. An elderly woman with swollen legs. I said, sit down, I'll take the coffee myself. She insisted. And there was something about it like Philip Roth's story about the mother who makes you feel guilty. There was something of the castrating mother about her." The conversation turned to a discussion of the airplane hijackings carried out by the Palestinian terror organizations. And then Meir said: "If the United Nations would pass a resolution that a country that takes in a hijacked plane has to return it within 48 hours, together with the hijackers in handcuffs, or otherwise they get expelled from the UN - automatically, without a vote, even Libya would return hijacked planes." The meeting took place a little while after the attempt by two Jews from the Soviet Union, among them Edward Kuznetsov, to hijack a Russian plane (December, 1970). Then Oz asked: "And what would have happened if Kuznetsov had succeeded in arriving at Lod with the hijacked plane? We would have returned the plane within 48 hours, and we would have returned the passengers within 48 hours. And what about Kuznetsov? Would we have sent him back within 48 hours in handcuffs, because otherwise they would kick us out of the UN?" Golda replied angrily: "How dare you compare?" Looking back, Oz says: "About this the poet Rahel [Bluwstein] says: 'Her world is narrow as the world of an ant.' In a different argument, Golda said to me: 'You speak awfully beautifully. I'm a simple Jewish woman and I simply can't understand what you're talking about.' And then I said to her coldly: 'So what?' And I can't describe the look she gave me. It was a burning look. It would cause all the intellectuals to blush and stammer. There was a kind of oversimplification and sarcasm about her that made people who had a complex outlook utterly defenseless. The moment she would say 'I don't understand,' a reason wasn't a reason and logic wasn't logic ... "Golda had an irreparable cognitive block, which stemmed from a total lack of imagination. Even if someone were to aim a pistol at her temple and ask her what the Arabs wanted of us, she would not have been capable of answering." Is there a connection between the diplomatic stagnation that paralyzed the government of Israel led by Golda Meir and the intelligence failure that found the Israel Defense Forces unprepared for the combined Egyptian-Syrian attack? Meir believed with all her might the myth of the unity of the workers' movement, writes Dr. Yossi Beilin in his book

"The Price of Unity." This unity emerged about half a year after the Six-Day War and in the new diplomatic and security reality following that war. As prime minister, Golda Meir faced the need to take crucial and fateful diplomatic decisions, but these decisions led to a party crisis that could have undermined the hegemony of the Labor Party and caused it to be defeated. The source of the diplomatic stagnation was in political needs that engendered the "status quo" and the perception that Israel was strong - that "Sharm el-Sheikh without peace is better than peace without Sharm el-Sheikh," as defense minister Moshe Dayan said.

'All is quiet'

The group that sat in the television studio delighted in the film that was being screened. This was at the end of September 1973. The camera focused on the two clasped hands that covered the entire width of the screen. Zoom out. And on the screen the arms were revealed. Another zoom out, to a girl and a boy standing arm in arm. And another zoom out. And behind the couple glittered the water of the Suez Canal. Then came the narrator's voice: "Quiet and serenity along the banks of the canal." This was the first film prepared by the Labor Party campaign headquarters for the elections that were slated for October 13, 1973. A few days earlier, the first campaign advertisement for the Labor Party had appeared in the daily newspapers. The ad showed a picture of a soldier sitting on a wicker chair facing the Suez Canal. An assault rifle lay across his lap and he was gazing at the Canal. The title reads: "And on the Bar-Lev line - all is quiet." When Dr. Michael Bar-Zohar, the deputy head of the campaign committee of the Labor election headquarters, went home after the film, he found a message waiting for him to get in touch urgently with defense minister Moshe Dayan. Bar-Zohar called and the mystery was solved: Dayan asked him angrily: "Tell me, Mickey, what's this ad? It's not Bar-Lev's line, it's my line, Moshe Dayan's." The quarrel over the credit ended in a compromise. The next ad was published with the same picture, but a different text: "At the Suez Canal - all is quiet." Three days later the war broke out.

The huge failure

"Put yourself in Nasser's shoes," suggested her sister Zipka Stern during an argument with Golda Meir about her political positions. Meir replied sternly: "Not a chance." On August 8, 1970, a truce was signed between Israel and Egypt, and the War of Attrition ended. A month and a half later, in September, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser died. Anwar Sadat became president of Egypt and a new era began. In his 1979 memoirs of his army days, "Pinkas Sherut," the Israeli ambassador to the United States at the time, Yitzhak Rabin, wrote about the Americans' impressions of Sadat: "Joseph Sisco [the assistant secretary of state] found that he understood Israel's difficulties. Sadat 'dived' into Israel's shoes and from this viewpoint, examined Israel's need to achieve security in a more rational way than could have been expected in the past from an Arab leader." During the first six months of Sadat's tenure, new political ideas began to surface. Defense minister Moshe Dayan and Labor MK Gad Yaakobi formulated a proposal for a partial agreement with Egypt, which would include an Israeli withdrawal to the Sinai Straits and the opening of the Suez Canal. Rabin supported this proposal. There were also signals from Sadat. "One day," says MK Yossi Sarid, now of Meretz but then a member of Labor: "Arnaud de Borchgrave, the editor of Newsweek, calls and tells me: I know you are close to the throne and Golda's prot?g?, and I have something that looks important and urgent. I have to see you right away, today. And Arnaud tells me: Listen, I've come back from Sadat and he wants peace with Israel and he has authorized me to come to Israel and pass along this message, which is serious.' "That very same day I went to Golda and I told her this," continues Sarid. "Golda looked at me and said: So what's new? Maybe you know what he wants. He wants all of Sinai, and there's not a chance that we're going to agree to give him all of Sinai.' I went back to Arnaud. I was terribly embarrassed. I didn't tell him that Golda had kicked me down the stairs. I told him that she had already received such proposals." Two years after the initiative was rejected, on April 9, 1973, Sadat said in an interview to De Borchgrave that the Americans were using computers to solve geopolitical problems, which he predicted would always lead them astray. "The time has come for a shock," Sadat said, adding that diplomacy would continue before, during and after the battle. Egypt, he told his interviewer, was prepared for a renewal of fighting, which he saw

then as being inevitable. Sarid: "Nobody could have predicted what would happen. Was it logical to think that Sadat decided to come here because Menachem Begin was prime minister? Is that logical? He didn't come before then because they didn't want him to come. Otherwise he might have come before the Yom Kippur War, or immediately after it. "And here is expert evidence: In November, 1977, Sadat comes to Israel, and Golda says something that is engraved in my memory: 'If I were the prime minister, Sadat wouldn't have come to me.' And she was right. Because she wasn't prepared to give up Sinai. And Sadat would not have come if all of Sinai hadn't been promised to him in advance. Therefore, all the circumstances prove that Golda was an obstacle. No one can say with complete certainty that the Yom Kippur War could have been prevented. But no one can say the opposite with certainty, either. There was a 10 or 15 percent chance of preventing the war. And that's what shocking."

Newly released documents: Division and disarray on eve of Yom Kippur War

Documents attest to the existence of an intelligence source who warned of an imminent attack, enabling Israel's leadership to consider a preemptive strike.

By Jonathan Lis 06.10.10

Following the release on Monday of minutes of prime minister Golda Meir's meeting with her war cabinet on the second day of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the state archives released Tuesday the minutes of eight additional meetings that the prime minister held during the war's first four days.

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David Elazar during the Yom Kippur War.

Photo by: Government Press Office

The documents provide a rare look at the military and diplomatic efforts made just hours before the Arab attack on Israel. They also attest to the existence of an intelligence source who provided credible information of an imminent attack, enabling Israel's political leadership to consider a preemptive strike on Egypt and Syria.

IDF chief of staff David Elazar suggested during the meetings "When there are skirmishes we tell the truth, but during wartime we must not tell the truth."

The documents show the close ties between King Hussein of Jordan and Israel's leadership on the eve of the war. They also again reveal Israel's complacency regarding the Arab armies' military might.

On the day the war broke out, Yom Kippur, the chief of military intelligence, Eli Zeira, was still expressing the belief that Egyptian president Anwar Sadat would not start another war with Israel. Despite that view, and against the recommendations of then-defense minister Moshe Dayan, Meir decided to mobilize 200,000 reserve soldiers so as to provide a substantial boost to the military in the event that war broke out.

Meir and senior defense officials also worked to procure additional military hardware, in the form of 40 fighter jet and 400 tanks, from the United States. The prime minister even considered a secret meeting with U.S. president Richard Nixon without the knowledge of the cabinet, in a effort to convince the American leader to come to Israel's assistance.

October 6, 1973, Yom Kippur, 8:05 A.M.

Meir convened an emergency meeting in Tel Aviv with senior defense officials. Six hours before the outbreak of the war, Israeli preparations for a general offensive by Arab armies finally began. The warnings of the intelligence source were being taken seriously, as was the fact that the Russians were pulling families out of Egypt and Syria, a sign of approaching war. But U.S. intelligence was not predicting war.

Minister Yisrael Galili said a source had suggested the war could be prevented by leaking information that would reach the Egyptians and Syrians, so they would know their plans for attack had been discovered.

Jordan also preoccupied those in attendance, because it wasn't clear if the kingdom would join in the assault on Israel.

Initially, Meir deliberated between Elazar's call for a full mobilization of the reserves and Dayan's request for a limited call-up.

"If you approve a major mobilization of the reserves, I won't resign," Dayan said. But with an eye to international reaction, he added, "A full mobilization before even one shot is fired - they will say right away that we are the aggressors."

At 9:20 A.M., a full mobilization was approved.

October 7, 1973

A discussion at the Prime Minister's Office centered on how to enlist American support at the United Nations and head off a cease-fire that would hurt Israel. Meir suggested putting together a list of requests.

The forum considered presenting U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger with a partial, distorted picture exaggerating Israel's poor situation to win the Nixon administration's support. Meir rejected the suggestion out of hand.

"We should telegraph him the details; he should get the real picture," she said. "We can't play hide and seek with him."

Minister Yisrael Galili asked in response, "Do we sell him the fact that we've moved out of the populated areas?" Meir replied, "I don't object to us saying, there's also risk to populated areas ... I want to give him the real picture. I'm not under the impression the situation is doomed ... We should tell it to him convincingly. Tonight was a bad night."

11:50 P.M.

A meeting of the ministers with senior defense officials. Yitzhak Rabin returned from a tour of the southern front and told the meeting, "The whole issue of the dead and wounded is complicated. There are 400 wounded and 80 killed. [GOC Southern Command Shmuel] Gorodish estimates there will be 150 to 200 killed before the counteroffensive." Rabin said he had no information on Egyptian losses.

October 8, 7:50 P.M.

Maj. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev and minister Yigal Allon report to the prime minister after a tour of both fronts. The Israeli forces' situation is beginning to improve, while the enemy forces are beginning to suffer serious damage.

"What they achieved today as compared to yesterday is enormous," Allon said. "The front was breached yesterday. If the Syrians had been more daring, they'd have made significant gains." Bar-Lev explained the Egyptian and Syrian successes as being partly due to technological superiority. "Both have the new Soviet tank plus infrared," he said. "They have an advantage there. On the first night we were surprised; we only knew they had it in theory ... Today we know about it and take it into account."

9:50 A.M.

Elazar asked Meir's permission to attack four Egyptian targets along the coast. Meir agreed.

"These are good targets," Elazar said. "Make them worry. We need to press them. After all, they too are only human."

October 9

Dayan voiced confidence in the Israeli forces' ability to overcome Syria and asked permission to bomb targets in Damascus. "There's an order: No retreat on the Golan," he said. "Fighting to the death and not moving ... What I'm suggesting and asking for approval of [is] bombings inside the city."

Meir asked whether he meant within the city itself, and Dayan confirmed this. He said the IDF can't muster a column to march on Damascus even as a decoy, but bombing in and around the city could "break the Syrians" - though he conceded, "you can't say the population wouldn't be hurt."

"Why would it necessarily break them?" Meir asked. "Would a bombing here break us?"

Elazar replied: "A heavy bombing here, on Reading and Ramat Aviv, would seriously disrupt things."

Meir suggested leaving on a secret, 24-hour mission to Washington, without informing the cabinet, to personally explain the gravity of the situation to Nixon. "I'd like to suggest a crazy idea: What if me and an appropriate military official go to Washington for 24 hours? ... Maybe he'll say he can offer nothing but sympathy. Maybe his personal pride will be roused by what they [the Russians] are doing to him ... I have the feeling that I'm at a point where I need to talk to him, and a feeling that he will understand."

DID ISRAEL EVER CONSIDER USING NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

By Yossi Melman 07.10.10

Newly declassified documents shine a light on the deliberations of Israel's leaders during the early days of the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

Media outlets around the world have reported that state archive documents declassified this week showed that Israel's leadership considered using "drastic means" during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

On October 9, a day after Egypt repulsed Israel's counterattack on the southern front, prime minister Golda Meir convened a top-level discussion in her office.

The outlook was grim. Troop losses were high, and ammunition and weapons stores were running out. At one point, Meir blurted out that she had a "crazy idea."

That idea, however, was not a nuclear attack, but many believe a lightning visit to Washington to meet with U.S. president Richard Nixon. The visit was to be so secret that Meir advocated not even informing the cabinet. Defense minister Moshe Dayan supported her plan, but it was never implemented.

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Defense Minister Moshe Dayan and Prime Minister Golda Meir in the Knesset on July 26, 1972.

At the same meeting, officials also discussed the option of having the air force bomb strategic sites in Damascus.

Was the "crazy idea" connected to a critical strike at Syria. It seems the answer is yes.

In another meeting - according to Hanna Zemer, the one-time editor of the newspaper Davar - Dayan spoke of the possibility that "the Third Temple," meaning the state, would be destroyed. Foreign news outlets have reported that Israel readied its nuclear weapons and even considered using them as a last resort.

The Dimona nuclear facility was completed in 1960. Those same foreign reports say Israel had several dozen nuclear weapons in October 1973, as well as the means to deliver them: French-made Mirage and U.S.-made Phantom aircraft and the Jericho missile, an Israeli improvement on a French model. All of these, the reports said, were at full readiness.

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh called his book on Israel's nuclear program "The Samson Option." The implication is that Israel would use atomic weapons if it viewed itself as facing certain, imminent destruction.

If these reports are accurate - and the documents released this week do not confirm them, but possibly only hint at them through portions blacked out by the military censor - this would be neither the first nor the last time Israel's leaders have discussed their so-called "doomsday weapons."

International researchers have posited that Israel had a nuclear device even before the 1967 Six-Day War.

In 1991, Israel again reportedly considered using atomic weapons in response to the Scud missile attacks launched by Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. Rightist ministers, including Yuval Ne'eman (a physicist involved in Israel's nuclear program), Rafael Eitan and Rehavam Ze'evi, urged Yitzhak Shamir's government to respond forcefully, but Shamir rejected Israeli military action out of hand.

In recent years, as Iran emerged as Israel's foremost threat, experts at home and abroad have raised the nuclear option once again. In lectures in Vienna and Berlin, and later in an ill-considered op-ed in The New York Times, historian Benny Morris has urged Israel's leaders to hit Iran with a nuclear bomb.

Thankfully, government officials on both left and right have thus far shown responsibility and stuck to the ambiguity policy instituted in 1961, under which Israel promised it would not be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East.

They know as well as anyone that the first country to do so will not only forfeit its seat among the community nations, but will likely cease to exist.

Will we get the hint?

**EITAN HABER WANTS US TO REMEMBER YOM KIPPUR WAR
AS WE ADDRESS IRANIAN THREAT 06.03.2009**

On Wednesday, October 3rd, 1973, 3,000 paratroopers from various generations gathered in Ramat Gan to mark the State of Israel's 25th birthday. I, along with my reservist friends Dan Shilon and Yair Aloni, were tasked with producing this major function.

Before taking the stage, then-Chief of Staff David Elazar (known as "Dado,") who was expected to deliver a brief speech moments later, turned to us. "I have nothing to say," this charming man lamented. "Nothing is happening, and I'm sick and tired of repeating things I said before."

"Just mutter something about our long arm, which will reach our enemies," I said. He looked at us helplessly, before taking the stage and uttering some words about our "long arm."

As we know, the Yom Kippur War, which left 2,700 Israelis dead, broke out three days later. This included many of those who attended the function, and just like the army chief thought that "nothing is happening."

Why am I mentioning this here? The answer will be provided at the end of this piece.

The top threat

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu may indeed be paranoid, haunted by the Holocaust, obsessive, and a chronic coward – yet he is completely right to place the Iranian nuclear threat at the top of Israel's agenda, while also trying to push it onto the American agenda.

If Netanyahu is wrong or if he is deceiving us, and if it turns out that we merely cried wolf, Bibi will be slammed from all directions. He is already used to it.

Yet if this is not the case, then the prime minister was completely justified in presenting Obama with a matter which could be a life and death question for us. Negligent handling of this matter would border on treason.

This is the top issue and nothing else matters in the near future, at least until it is resolved one way or another. It would be better if it can be resolved without firing one shot.

We're on our own

The prime minister's recent visit to the US can teach us many things, and mostly that we are on our own in the war against the Iranian nukes. Netanyahu was glad to have been able to convince the US president to limit to talks with Tehran to the end of this year, so they say, but who knows whether that would be too late.

As of now, unless there is some kind of secret agreement regarding cooperation with the Americans on Iran, the State of Israel is alone in this war – and there's nobody there to rescue us.

Israel cannot act against the Iranian nuclear threat alone, and therefore, at this time we require first-rate creativity in order to enlist the world, and most certainly the US, to the campaign to save the globe from this bomb.

Some will be happy to read this. They have been claiming for a while now that "the whole world is against us," and that "the Jewish mind will find a solution."

And back to the story at the beginning of this column: Years ago, before the Yom Kippur War, some people said, wrote, and warned that the situation cannot go on the way it is, and therefore a war was expected sooner or later.

Those who made this argument encountered the well-known Israeli response: We're the best, the IDF is the best, we're the masters of the land, and we control the world. We, we, we. So now, just to remind ourselves what ended up happening, go back and read the first section of this piece.

Vietnam and Yom Kippur Wars were closely connected, newly released U.S. documents reveal Secret documents contain Henry Kissinger's conversations with Golda Meir and former South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu.

By Amir Oren Haaretz 17 10 2010

Henry Kissinger, at 50, was at the height of his powers: secretary of state and national security advisor, hero of the negotiations that led to America's withdrawal from Vietnam, master of the mediation between Israel and Egypt and Syria. Golda Meir, a woman of 75, was Israel's prime minister. When the two met, they were usually accompanied by colleagues, aides and transcribers.

Nguyen Van Thieu was a military man and a politician, the president of South Vietnam and Kissinger's contemporary. Like the prime minister of Israel, he was a cranky and ungrateful client of the United States government. On November 29, 1973, about a month after the end of the Yom Kippur War, in a meeting of the crisis management team he headed in Washington, Kissinger confessed: "I've always had this secret desire to get Golda [Meir] into negotiations with [President] Thieu. What a scene that would be! They both deserve each other."

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The juxtaposition of the Kissinger documents and Meir transcripts reveals the extent to which Israel erred in understanding its place in the universe.

A week later, Kissinger met with South Vietnamese foreign minister Vuong Van Bac, who asked for fighter planes and antitank weaponry.

"If you promise not to record this," Kissinger said, "I'll tell you one of my secret wishes - that is to get President Thieu into negotiations with the Israeli prime minister. That would be a match. Your president is a real pro. The Israelis also want anti-tank weapons. So let the Israeli prime minister and President Thieu negotiate to see who would get our antitank weapons. No, seriously, I appreciate your need for antitank weapons."

Kissinger hastened to reassure Bac: "[Let] me say again we will do the maximum possible to preserve your independence and integrity."

In other words, the United States would act only within the bounds of what was actually possible; the administration would do only what Congress approved. Or as Bac heard a year later from a new president, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon's successor, "I want to reassure you we will support President Thieu in every way - economically, politically, diplomatically. Our problem is not us, but on the Hill." These are quotes from secret U.S. documents released last week, just as transcripts of Golda Meir's war cabinet from the terrible days of October 1973 were revealed. The American papers are included in the last volume of Vietnam War documents published by the U.S. State Department - extending until the fall of the regime in South Vietnam and the occupation of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in April of 1975.

Backed into a corner

Reading these documents reveals how much closer the two crises were actually connected than Israel's leaders assumed at the time. From transcripts of discussions conducted by Meir, three additional ministers in the war cabinet (Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon and Yisrael Galili), chief of staff David Elazar and a handful of military officers, civilian officials and advisors, one can see how strategic assessments and breaking a large equation down into its constituent factors is no simple matter.

While a preventive strike is "operationally tempting," as Elazar said, it would result in little military benefit and would incriminate Israel as a perpetrator of acts of violence, making it difficult to obtain U.S. aid. Calling up a small number of reserves would be enough to stop a potential Syrian attack, but not enough for the counter-attack Elazar imagined on the road to Damascus, and abroad the call-up would likely be interpreted as a prelude to aggression. A swift westward crossing of the Suez Canal, as division commander Ariel Sharon suggested, would be spectacular but liable to put the force that crossed the canal in a vulnerable position,

expose Sinai to the armored forces of the Egyptian army and render the small forces that comprised Central Command hostage to the caprices of Jordan's King Hussein.

These discussions reveal a series of failures on the part of the Israeli leadership, which found itself backed into a corner. It neglected to define a realistic overarching national goal. It failed in its obligation to prevent war and to prepare, should war break out, an army that would win swiftly and inexpensively. The main issue the decision makers therefore found themselves occupied with in the hours before the Arabs pulled the trigger, and thereafter, was American aid - both in materiel and in diplomatic moves for a ceasefire. Without this aid, Israel would have been exhausted and defeated in a long war; with it, Israel developed total dependence on Washington.

Fortunately for Israel, Washington does not only consist of the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department, but also Congress. Thanks to Israel's power in Congress, it has fared better than other, smaller allies, like South Vietnam. In the absence of congressional support, they did not win the administration's affection; this is why Saigon fell and Jerusalem hasn't. But along the way there have been important reminders that the pampered Israel is not an only child and moreover Washington is not omnipotent. The United States needs to reach diplomatic agreements with European nations if it seeks ports, bases and airspace there that would be at the disposal of the aid effort.

The juxtaposition of the Meir transcripts and the Kissinger documents reveals the extent to which Israel erred in understanding its place in the universe. Meir, Dayan and their government did not prepare to absorb a military effort on the part of the Arabs to break the diplomatic deadlock. The preparation on the front was inadequate, and the army that had been built up was not trained for the scenario that intelligence had obtained but the General Staff and the commanders neglected to internalize.

As the war dragged on, other parties came to their senses and OPEC countries altered the situation entirely by declaring an oil embargo on the 11th day of the war. The oil shortage and the rise in prices severely damaged America's strength. The Americans did not have enough fuel, weapons or money for themselves and all the countries dependent on them.

"I get the impression - after October 6 - there is going to be an offensive in every part of the world," Kissinger said during a discussion of Vietnam at the end of November of that year.

The head of the CIA, William Colby, acknowledged that the intelligence assessment had changed and it was in fact only based on circumstantial evidence: North Vietnam was sending many forces south, at an increasing rate. Deputy secretary of state Kenneth Rush wondered how it happened that his ambassador in Saigon, a staunch supporter of Thieu, observed: "I'm surprised he didn't ask for Israel's \$2.2 billion."

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon, Adm. Thomas Moorer, concurred: "Many of the things [Thieu] wants, Israel wants too. We have to make some decisions."

In another discussion, Graham Martin, the ambassador to Saigon, asked about the connection between what was happening in the Middle East and Vietnam. "It hurt us with the Arabs. [Syrian president Hafez] Assad said in his talks with me, 'You look what you've done to Taiwan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Portugal, etc.' (There was some debate between him and his foreign minister whether Portugal fit into the category). But anyway, Assad said, 'Therefore if you look at this, you will give up Israel, and so [Egyptian president Anwar] Sadat should simply not give in.' On the Israeli side, they said, 'We don't want to wind up like Thieu.'"

Shortly before the final collapse in April of 1975, Kissinger reported that in Congress that they had told him: "'You've got to give aid to Israel because they win their wars, but we can't give aid to other countries that are losing their wars.' Well, on that goddamn theory it's a wonder that the Soviets are not in Bonn already. On that theory the Nazis would have taken over the world."

'Like a surgeon with a scalpel'

Last week Kissinger was the main speaker at a conference convened at the State Department, his old stomping grounds, to mark this last volume's publication.

He spoke about the polar differences between the two sides at the end of the 1960s and the start of the '70s. The Americans sought a compromise; the North Vietnamese a victory, to replace the regime in the south and to unite the two halves of Vietnam under their rule. When

they became stronger militarily, they attacked; when they were blocked, they agreed to bargain; when they signed an agreement, they waited for an opportunity to break it and win.

Kissinger's interlocutor and partner in the Nobel Prize for Peace (which he did not go to accept), was the "special advisor" from North Vietnam, Le Duc Tho. According to Kissinger, he "operated on us like a surgeon with a scalpel with enormous skill, always courteous, but he occasionally would be told from Hanoi, according to that book, to remember that there could be no negotiations until there had been a military change. And then his purpose was to get us to that point."

Kissinger was slightly envious of the North Vietnamese. Bargaining? Yes, of course, but only from a position of strength. Concessions? Definitely, but only tactical.

Richard Holbrooke - who at that time was a minor official at the State Department and White House, and is now representing President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the Afghanistan-Pakistan tangle - emphasized another lesson: If an opening for dialogue comes along, it is a pity to waste it on marginal issues, like a truce or suspension of bombardments. It is worth aiming for an inclusive agreement, as the internal politics are liable to change - such as a new president being elected or the majority opinion in Congress changing.

When Holbrooke considers the present challenges, he remembers Vietnam, as does Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of the forces in Afghanistan, who also wrote his doctorate at Princeton about the relations between the diplomatic echelon and the military echelon in the Vietnam War. The top officials of Israel's diplomatic and military echelons would do well to bolster their reading of the Golda Meir transcripts with a reading of the Henry Kissinger documents.