Evaluating Moshe Dayan as Commander of the Jerusalem Front and his Military Campaign

Moshe Dayan exhibited a unique style in his role as commander of the battle at Sinai in 1956 during the Suez Canal Conflict, which reflected both the best and worst of his personality. Like many aspects of his life, his actions there provoked heated debate and arguments, with opinions about him within the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) sharply divided: some admired his distinctive style, while others harshly criticized his work as a commander. Among other things, Dayan was criticized for entering Sinai wih the 7th Brigade without approval. He was also criticized for the failure at Umm Qatef during the Six Day War and the improper operation of the 10th and 37th Brigades, and was subject to accusations that his lack of availability at key decision points contributed to these failures.

In reality, Dayan's general approach was similar that that he had shown in the past: to be as close as possible to the battle front and area of engagement. Dayan did not invent a new method of command. A situation in which the commander does not remain at headquarters reflects a military doctrine according to which, in the absence of the commander there must be a “an acting deputy who is authorized as his surrogate.” This type of commander who does not remain at headquarters engages in the day-to-day management of the operations: the commander’s orders are implemented as he gives them, and only the commander is authorized to change them through an acting deputy. This role is intended "for a situation in which the commander leaves headquarters [...] for command in advance, patrols, meetings, etc., but exists and functions properly, and his departure from his headquarters does not impair his function, but only ensures or strengthens him."[[1]](#footnote-1)

Dayan took this option to the extreme. He was aware of the problems created by his prolonged absence from the command post, and justified himself:

1. עקד, אמ"ץ, תוה"ד, **תורה בסיסית מטכ"לית: פיקוד ושליטה**, נובמבר 2006, עמ' 42.

Aked, Amatz, Tohad, 2006, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)