

# Yom Ha'Atzmaut Through the Lens of a 1952 Book Ban

Ezer Diena, [ediena@torontotorah.com](mailto:ediena@torontotorah.com)



## 1. Aharon Megged, Haggadat Ha'Atzmaut, Makkot and Dayeinu (photos courtesy of NLI, link below)



## 2. Some (Hebrew) articles on this topic:

<https://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?item=4643>

<https://www.israelhayom.co.il/article/82721>

<https://blog.nli.org.il/the-independence-haggadah/>

<https://bit.ly/2VLiMzd>

## 3. Summary of the History of this Haggadah (based on printed interviews with collector Aviram Paz, historian Yoel Raffel, and other research)

- Commissioned by Ben-Zion Dinur, the Minister of Education and Culture, Moshe Shoham on behalf of the IDF
- Written by Aharon Megged (nee Greenberg), a well-known (and award-winning) Israeli author, who was on reserve duty at the time
- Followed the format of the Haggadah Shel Pesach, including 4 cups of wine
- 10,000 copies were printed and distributed primarily in the army
- Meant to be read on the night of Yom Ha'Atzmaut on IDF bases
- Received praise and was copied in the Ma'ariv newspaper that Yom Ha'Atzmaut (link: <https://bit.ly/3aL9NCC>)
- A copy came to the hands of Rabbi Shlomo Goren, then-Chief Rabbi of the IDF, shortly before Yom Ha'Atzmaut, and he was extremely upset by it
- He apparently issued an ultimatum to Prime Minister David Ben Gurion that he would resign if it was not recalled
- In addition to a strong reaction in the religious media, the Chief Rabbis of Israel and other religious institutions put pressure on the government to recall all the copies and destroy them
- According to collector Aviram Paz, Hatzofeh compared Megged to the rasha in the Haggadah, claiming that he had no creativity to write a text of his own, so he had to copy the Haggadah and suck the soul out of it
- Overall, there are conflicting reports on whether or not it was used even on that Yom Ha'Atzmaut in any official capacity

- Prime Minister Ben Gurion recalled it, and demanded that all copies be destroyed
- According to some accounts, they were actually burnt (!)
- The official reason given for the recall (by the IDF's spokesman) was that it might have been insensitive to some soldiers in the army, and that was published by Ma'ariv
- Megged himself did not even manage to keep a copy (he later tried to purchase one, but apparently did not have the funds to do so)
- Approximately 20 copies remained, one of which was sold at a Sotheby's auction (<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.7.html/2002/judaica-ta0027>), a few others have been auctioned off as well, and the National Library of Israel has a physical copy (since digitized)

#### 4. Some Highlights from Haggadat Ha'Atzmaut (full text at <https://benyehuda.org/read/13952>)

Traditional Haggadah Shel Pesach	Haggadat Ha'Atzmaut
פרעה במצרים	גויים בכל הארצות
עבדים היינו ל	ואילו
לא הוציא הקב"ה את אבותינו ממצרים הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו משועבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים	לא יצאנו הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו משועבדים היינו לגויים עד היום הזה.
צא ולמד מה	בקשו הערבים לעשות לנו
בקש לבן הארמי לעשות ליעקב אבינו	וישימו
[המצריים] עליו שרי מסיים	עלינו הבריטים המושלים בארץ נציבים ושוטרים
כמה מעלות טובות	לצבא עלינו
למקום עלינו	לא על ידי מלאך ולא על ידי שרף ולא על ידי שליח...
אלא הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו	כי אם על ידי צבא הגנה לישראל

#### 5. Aharon Megged, Haggadat Ha'Atzmaut, The Four Children

כנגד ארבעה בנים דיברה תורה: אחד חכם, אחד רשע, אחד תם ואחד שאינו יודע לשאול: חכם מה הוא אומר? מה העדות והחוקים והמשפטים אשר עליהם בנויה מדינתנו? ואף אתה אמור לו מהלכות המדינה: פתוחה לעלייה יהודית ולקיבוץ גלויות, שוקדת על פיתוח הארץ לכל תושביה, מושתתת על יסודות החירות, הצדק והשלום לאור חזונו של נביאי ישראל. רשע מה הוא אומר? מה המדינה הזאת לכם? לכם ולא לו, ולפי שהוציא עצמו מן הכלל כפר בעיקר. ואף אתה הקהה את שיניו ואמור לו: בעבור זה היא לנו ולא לו, כי אילו היה שם – לא היה נגאל. תם מה הוא אומר? מה זאת? ואמרת: בעלייה, עבודה והגנה כבשנו את הארץ והקמנו את המדינה. ושאינו יודע לשאול, את פתח לו, שנאמר: וסיפרת את עלילות הגבורה לכל תושבי המדינה. תושבי המדינה – הוותיקים, כל תושבי המדינה – החדשים והוותיקים גם יחד.

Corresponding to four children did the Torah speak: one wise, one evil, one innocent and one who does not know how to ask:

What does the smart one say? What are the testimonies, statutes and judgements upon which our state is built? And you should tell them the laws of the state: open to Jewish immigration and ingathering of the exiles, hard work on the development of the land for all its inhabitants, based on the foundations of freedom, justice and peace in light of the vision of the prophets of Israel.

What does the evil one say? What is this country for you? To you and not to them, and since they excluded themselves from the community, they denied the principle. And even you numb their teeth and tell them: for this reason it is to us and not them, because if they were there - they would not be have been redeemed.

What does the innocent one say? What is it? And you should say: Through immigration, labor and defense, we conquered the land and established the state.

And the one who does not know how to ask, you open for them, as it says: "And you shall tell the stories of heroism to all the inhabitants of the state." "The inhabitants of the state" - the old, "all the inhabitants of the state" - the new and old alike.