



Allen King

# Yoav and Mira Were a Team

In June 1980, **Mira and Yoav Ashriel** z"l were guest teachers at the eighth annual Israeli Folk Dance Institute in San Luis Obispo in California that was, at that time, the only west coast Israeli folk dance camp. This was the one opportunity for dancers from both northern and southern California to come together to dance and learn dances from a choreographer who came "all the way from Israel".

**Yoav and Mira** were a team. They taught all of his dances together, both circles and couples. We were used to learning from a single choreographer, but never from a "team" such as **Yoav and Mira**. One could tell how much they loved and adored each other, and how they would work together to make certain that the dancers learned the precise steps and the styling of each dance.

**Yoav** had a unique way to make all of the dancers feel comfortable as he taught us and filled the room with excitement as he taught a new dance or reviewed one that we were familiar with. He was also a demanding teacher, very particular about the how his dances were learned and danced. But, once we learned them, we could never dance them differently. They felt just right when we danced them. They were both simple and interesting at the same time. This was, and still is, a rare quality in Israeli folk dance.

**Yoav** had a commitment to combining the music and the steps into a story about daily life in Israel.

We experience the story every time we dance one of his dances. Some of the dances we learned that weekend were "Ad Or Ha'Boker", "Be'Lev Echad", "Ha'Shoshana Porachat" and "Kleyzmer".

Now, skip forward 28 years to the summer of 2008, when **Yoav Ashriel** made his last visit to the United States where he taught



Father and daughter – Yoav and Rakefet – dancing together

at the Hora Keff and Shorashim dance camps in New York. Yoav had been in California once before but had never had the opportunity to come as a tourist. I was able to host him for a special visit. He was 78 years old at that time, but his age did not prevent him from teaching at three dance sessions in the San Francisco area over the course of one week. Hundreds of dancers came to learn from a "vatic", a choreographer from the second generation of Israeli folk dance choreographers. It was wonderful to once again experience his teaching style, this time with his daughter **Rakefet**, as his partner. It recalled his teaching style with **Mira** z"l, his wife, from his earlier visits in 1980 and 1987.

**Yoav** loved California, especially his time in San Francisco, where he stayed at a boutique hotel near Union Square as the guest of **David Apfelbaum**, a strong supporter of Israel and friend to **David Ben-Gurion** and **David "Dado" Elazar**, the ninth Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces.

Many of his dances have stood the test of time and are now considered classics and representative of the spirit that can be evoked by dancing a truly great dance.

We will miss **Yoav** but his memory will live on in his dances. May his memory be a blessing.



Mira and Yoav Ashriel

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