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Photographs:  
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All Pictures are from  
the "Hora Shalosh"  
Camp.

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# In The End, We Are Here For You

## My insights, the survey results and your responses

The article, "We Need a Fallow Year" (<https://bit.ly/3qeRu67>), which was published in our previous issue, was written over a long time with a great deal of deliberation and changes. I am very familiar with the economic considerations and sensitivities in our field. The wording in the article was very careful so as not to harm any of those involved in the field.

My proposal concerns the livelihoods of many people, my friends and myself. I suggest and hope that we all think about the long term and best interest of our folk dance culture, and not just about the current interest of each of us personally. In the end, we are here, not only for making a living, but also, to build and preserve a unique culture that was created here with great effort, and we are here mainly so that many people will continue to dance and that new dancers will join.

I am very familiar with the argument directed towards me: "What are you talking about? After all, you are 'contributing' to this race by filming every new dance..." So:

1. I don't choreograph the dances. I categorize them and allow you to find what you are looking for, to view and learn the dances in the best way possible; and also bring 'a little' order to this chaos.
2. If **only Shlomo Maman** (for example) puts new dances aside for a limited time, will that prevent everyone else from continuing to choreograph and distribute new dances? – **Of course not!** There will only be fewer good dances.
3. If **only Maurice Stone** (for example) in Machol Europa would teach only existing dances and not new dances. Will this affect the "race for new dances"? – **Of course not!** This will only adversely affect the most vital camp in England.
4. If **only Yaron Carmel** (for example) didn't teach some new dance, would that prevent all the other dance leaders from teaching anything new? – **Of course not!**
5. If **only "Rokdim"** doesn't film new dances, will that prevent all the dances that are choreographed by hundreds from uploading to YouTube and other networks, to get "likes" (from those who haven't even tried the dance)? – **Of course not!** This will only increase the already existing mess.

Therefore, **only the combined action**, of us all, can (perhaps) bring about a slight calm and thought and search for a way. The idea that "supply and demand" will create order is far from the truth. Regulation (various screening committees) is also neither possible nor desirable.

I am well acquainted with the eagerness and demands of many dancers to learn "the new dance taught yesterday by dance leader **Moishe Zilberman** (as a parable)". However, as an instructor, and as the owner of the "Rokdim" website, I hear many other voices. You can read about them below...

The competition between the dance instructors for the hearts of the audience is fundamentally a positive thing. I suggest that this competition focus on the quality of the instruction, the choice of dances and the mix of dances, the attitude towards the dancers, and more. The competition over the amount of

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food and/or **who would be the first to teach the new dance choreographed today** – both of which I propose to skip.

And finally, the considerations of the dance choreographers and their interest are clear and legitimate. They all want to express themselves, earn the respect of the dancers, become famous and make some money. The important question we need to ask: **Is this situation in the public interest, and especially, is it in the best interest of this culture?**

I thought the responses in the survey would be more or less split, but I was surprised by the number and intensity of written responses (over 500 people also took the time to write their opinions). It is not possible, of course, to bring them all here. Many thanks to all the writers.

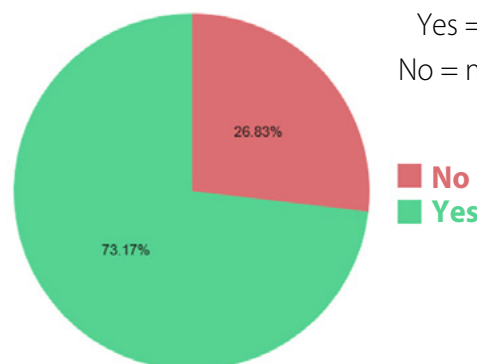
Results (up to the time of publication):

**The survey is anonymous**, so there are no names next to the responses, but they send a clear message to us, the instructors, and invite thinking outside the box. The survey was not about **"whether it can be done"**. The survey asked whether or not you want a "Fallow – Gap year (Shmita)."

I have read all the comments. Only some of them are listed here. Many reacted similarly. Responses **"in favor"** of such a timeout are listed first (in gray), followed by those **"not in favor"** listed in red and then **"mixed responses with suggestions"** that are listed in blue.

#### Diagram of voters in Israel:

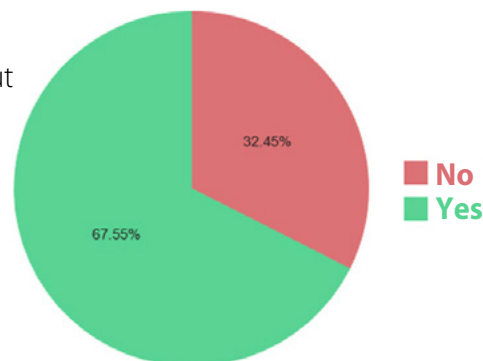
In Israel, almost 1,000 people voted, with nearly 75% wanting a break.



Yes = in favor of a timeout,  
No = not in favor of a timeout

#### Diagram of voters outside of Israel:

Outside of Israel, almost 300 dancers voted, and here too almost 70% of voters favor a timeout.



**Note:** The responses here are only those of voters from the survey provided in English. Responses to the survey in Hebrew are published in the Hebrew issue.







## Responses in favor of a "Fallow (gap) Year" or some "time out"

**"I'm in total agreement; there are so many great dances from the past that need to be re-taught and this would give us the opportunity and time to learn them."**

- My group continuously asks for the older dances. I have begun teaching dances through the decades from the 1940's – 1980's. There are too many new dances and the beautiful old ones are being forgotten. Yes, to the "Shmita"!!
- I couldn't agree more with this article; good for you, and so true!!!
- Even if it is not a time out year, then perhaps for six months. Or a time out for three months, and limit the new dances created over the next two – three months and then repeat another time out for the following three months.
- I'm in total agreement; there are so many great dances from the past that need to be re-taught and this would give us the opportunity and time to learn them. Great idea!
- Kol Hakavod Yaron. Great initiative. This was very much needed.
- A blessed initiative!!
- Over 1000 dances are taught. Reinforcement is better than the shallow teaching of many dances.
- We lose so many of the older, very good dances, because we are constantly learning new ones.
- I couldn't agree more. I've been saying it for years.
- The ideas expressed in the article have been my exact sentiments for a while now. I believe that Covid has made the situation even more exaggerated. It seems anyone can now be a choreographer and they only seem to be taking the existing steps and reworking them into what we say are 'not keeper' dances. There are sessions that exist to keep up with what is current with online sessions saying the dances are done all over the world. And, as mentioned in the article, they fall to the wayside after a month or two.
- One year without new dances is a very good idea. Too many good dances have been forgotten.
- There are so many very bad dances / bad music being pushed at camps, and just as soon they are being dumped from the dance sessions; it doesn't really matter. A 4-hour session uses about 120 dances out of the 8000 registered dances. This means that 7000 should be dumped forever.
- I agree that there are too many dances that don't last very long, as if choreographers are competing against each other to be the most prolific. This is not a unifying approach to Israeli folk dancing. (It becomes very divisive as groups start "following" one choreographer or teacher, over another.). We have forgotten what our mandate is: To unify the Jewish community all over the world through dance.
- The choreographers can still make a living teaching their older dances and reviewing other dances. There are so many good older dances we don't do and don't know.
- I'm ALL for a gap year ... Yes, yes, yes!
- Yes, for me! It could be 2 years and I suggest the camps should prioritize BONDING between the dancers, i.e., really creating a community... There is no need to always teach, review and dance. There are other things... I can help with suggestions.



- I have been dancing all over the world for over 30 years and find it more and more difficult to find a common "dance language" in different dance groups. I have lost the fun as it has become very technical and I copy-paste a lot, without getting into a flow. I therefore love the idea of pulling the emergency break and having a gap year.
- The quality of the old time Israeli folk dances must not be over shadowed by the immense number of new dances which often lack the beautiful spirit of the older ones.
- Between COVID and two hip replacements, I am far behind in learning new dances. This might help me catch up!
- I think it's a great idea. Too many new short-lived dances have pushed out wonderful old dances.
- There are many, many great dances that will be forgotten if they're not taught. Focus on teaching quality old dances instead of creating something with hardly any meaning to the words of the song or to Israeli culture.
- I agree with your vision. I've also practiced Balkan dances during 40 years without new dances (very few). It is not a problem. Passion is still intact.
- I have been feeling the need to do exactly that for some time.
- More teaching videos of the old dances need to be posted.
- Very good idea.
- Too many new dances, too many choreographers, there is no end! In the future, you have to allow 2 dances per year by a choreographer and with no exceptions!!! This problem exists for so many years, and no one has resolved it!! An important remark; some choreographers are choreographing

too many new dances to teach in Camps around the world. They have the pressure to do it.

- I have been dancing for over 40 years, mostly in the Boston area. Also, in Israel on my annual visits and in camps in the USA. The article about the "gap year" is well written and covers all aspects of why we need to do so. Everyone that dances with me would agree with you. Thank you for bringing this up.
- I totally agree.
- I am from those groups of people who consider the dances of 20-30 years ago much better to dance to than the new ones of today.
- Many Israeli dance adherents are 50 years plus. Happy to keep repeating existing dances to reach the stage of flow state dancing i.e., effortless momentum, body and mind fluidity... enjoying the sensation and in the zone.
- I think it's a good idea. Choreographers can still do their work and release their new dances next year. I'd like to go to a camp where I don't have to learn six new dances that may or may not last.
- I would LOVE to have a full year without any new dances.
- I am absolutely okay with you. For many years, it seems that quantity is more important than quality. In my first years of Israeli dancing, I kept all the dances taught in camps. On the contrary, today I choose only few dances which please me (less creativity from choreographers, not interesting music, gestures without meanings...)
- The glut of new dances has been an issue for quite some time. Too many older and wonderful dances are being lost along the way. Thank you for your effort to do something about this situation.
- Good luck! Choreographers are very unlikely to agree.
- I think it is good, because there are so many dances that I still need to learn.
- I especially love the older Israeli Dances with beautiful songs and choreographies.
- I love the analysis in the article, which is very insightful. I have been aware of the situation for many years and it makes keeping up very hard. Israeli dancing is like an IQ test.
- High time!





## Responses not in favor of a "Fallow (gap) Year"

- I like new dances every week...!!
- My reason would be that when we have a camp, the dancers want to learn new dances from the choreographers who are coming from Israel.
- I have thought about this topic many times.
  1. Those of us who are newer dancers are in a very different position than those who have been dancing for 30 years. I really would like to write a longer article (in English, sorry) if I had more time this week about the various ways in which your analysis presupposes years of Israeli dancing experience, and would DISCOURAGE rather than encourage new dancers.
  2. I would be very concerned about the impact on the earnings of choreographers.
  3. What is really needed is not a stop to producing new dances.
- I love any dance taught that the markid(a) is passionate about, period.
- This is an unrealistic idea. If teachers or choreographers want to stop learning and creating, it should be their own decision.
- I disagree with the premise. Israeli dancing has spawned a new stream, rooted in the traditional folk dancing, but separate from it. Creating dances to popular songs/music (which will not have a gap year) keeps dancing vibrant and alive. I have no problem with legacy sessions or hours, but do not support a halt in ongoing dance creation.
- Although many new dances dilute the general quality of dances, I consider the thought of a one-year ban of new dances. Most classes that

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I visit usually include a reasonable mix of good old and new dances. For me, I believe that the new dances I learn stimulate the brain/mind and must continue.

- I love dances from every era, and I play a mix of them in my sessions. I do not want to forget the older dances, but I also embrace the new. My hope is to have a balance in my sessions so that all eras are represented and appreciated. I enjoy learning new dances at dance camps even if I don't like them or teach them to my group. It's part of the fun of the dance camp. I also do not wish to interfere with the livelihood of the choreographers who bring fresh dances to the mix.
- I don't think a gap year is necessary. I do think that choreographers should be more circumspect in their productivity. We don't need "6-week wonders". Taught today & forgotten in a month & a half. We need modern or new classics every time something is produced. New dances don't have to be complex; but, they can be, and complexity should not be shunned. New dances don't have to be simple; but, simplicity can be good as well. The main characteristic should be that it is worth dancing.
- You cannot control creativity – the problem is to ensure quality through an agreed process.



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## Mixed responses with suggestions:

- While in our first hour we continue to do a good number of the older dances, I believe we can also enjoy the newer Israeli music with newer dances to add more interest for the current dancers. I don't believe new dances should be sacrificed for the older ones done repetitively. It is much easier to tempt younger people to enter the field of Israeli dance when they see the more interesting dances done to exciting music. Then they can begin from the beginning with the older dances. One is not sacrificed for the other.
- I am a dancer of many different styles and genres, but I started with Israeli dance when I was 9 years old, i.e., 50 years ago. What brings me back to Israeli dances is not necessarily the cool music or cool steps, but songs with definite Jewish content, be it songs from Israel, prayers and tehilim [Psalms], Jewish and Israeli poetry, songs about the holidays and traditions [like Lechu Neranenah], etc. I don't need to dance those dances that people choreographed because the song is popular.
- I agree that there's a problem. But I don't agree with the solution, mostly because for me it seems unworkable and therefore it would fail.
- I also think, there are too many new dances, but I would not want to have a year without new dances (especially not 2024). Although, they could be restricted to just a few. I don't think it will help to have one year without any new dance and then afterwards, it would continue as before. For my teaching, I choose dances, when I like the music and the steps, and also older dances.
- It is a huge problem, that is well covered in the article, but I don't think that a "shmita/gap year" is the solution. I think that choreographers should be able to freely create new dances but there should be an independent committee that will review the new dances and would, for example, carefully release only the best 10 dances each year.
- This is actually a VERY GOOD IDEA. And a better idea would be to list the 20 best dances of the previous 5 years so every dance session in the world would be in the same page. Here in South Florida we are soooooooooooooo behind schedule! That would be more organized.
- The increase in the number of dances over the past thirty years looks more like a competition among choreographers, rather than a need to uplift the Israeli dance community with fresh inspiring music to dance to!
- I doubt that the majority of choreographers would agree to do it. Good luck, Yaron. I agree with your thoughts on the matter. Perhaps a 6-month Shnat [gap year] would be more appealing to the choreographers?




- Maybe put a cap on how many dances a creator can introduce per year.
- I enjoy dancing existing dances, but I like to learn new dances too. Thank you.
- I am interested in the preservation of the early years of Israeli Folk Dance; I love the old and modern. This would be a good time for all to renew, rejuvenate, and preserve all that is good about Israeli Folk Dance and to prepare for the future, so that all will benefit.
- Do you really think that a gap year solves the problem? I'm sure that in the years after the gap year, there will be even more new dances! One reason for the problem is the opening of more and more camps worldwide. For Israeli teachers and choreographers, it is a good way of earning money. To be invited, they need new dances.





- I agree; however, I wish you luck with pushing this resolution through. Dance groups will want to continue inviting "choreographers" to their camps who will teach new dances, however bad (my opinion), by people who call themselves a choreographer, who, these days, may be any Tom, Dick or Harry.
- I have been dancing for over 50 years in both the Israeli and international folk dance communities and learned Harkada from **Tirza Hodes**. The essence of "folk dance" is that [ordinary] folk can join in (any) dance. Any person with fluency and capability in some basic vocabulary/patterns (skip, run, hop-step, grapevine, Yemenite, etc.) should be able to do a folk dance with minimal instruction (mostly learn by doing).

- First is to get the leading choreographers (**Bitton, Maman, Barzilay, Barzelai**) to agree to take a break for one year.
- A gap year is much needed, especially for older individuals but the dancers here find it hard to keep up the pace of new dances with our small classes.
- I like the idea of no new dances but would like to continue learning and teaching from the current repertoire. I believe that the two ideas are not necessarily linked and that not teaching dances would be a disincentive for new dancers who need to add to their repertoire.
- There is a saying that variety is the spice of life. So regular changes are good for us.
- I am in favor of a 'gap' year, but I fear the dances that will be brought back might be too obscure or difficult to make them popular enough to remain in the repertoire.
- First, there are too many new dances every year. Second, I don't understand... That would also mean no new DANCERS. To a person who only comes to dancing now, EVERY dance is new. I think this way of thinking is something that I just don't understand.
- There are so many already created but unknown dances that we could completely stop creating new ones and continue learning "new" dances for years... but I understand that this would turn choreographers into "simple" dance leaders...
- I voted yes. However, I do not think it is at all possible to happen. It's too late. Choreographers will always create. There are always new songs. We will never catch up on all the great dances even if we had a 10-year gap.
- Yes, there are too many dances to learn, but it's not a good idea to stifle creativity.
- I got the point and see the opinion of a part of the community that dances. But there are also lots of other opinions! We should also decide what we call "Folk Dance" and what we call "Folklore". It is really not the same. 

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