Dance of the Month

Amen La'Milim – Amen to the Words

Translation:
Jan Jackson

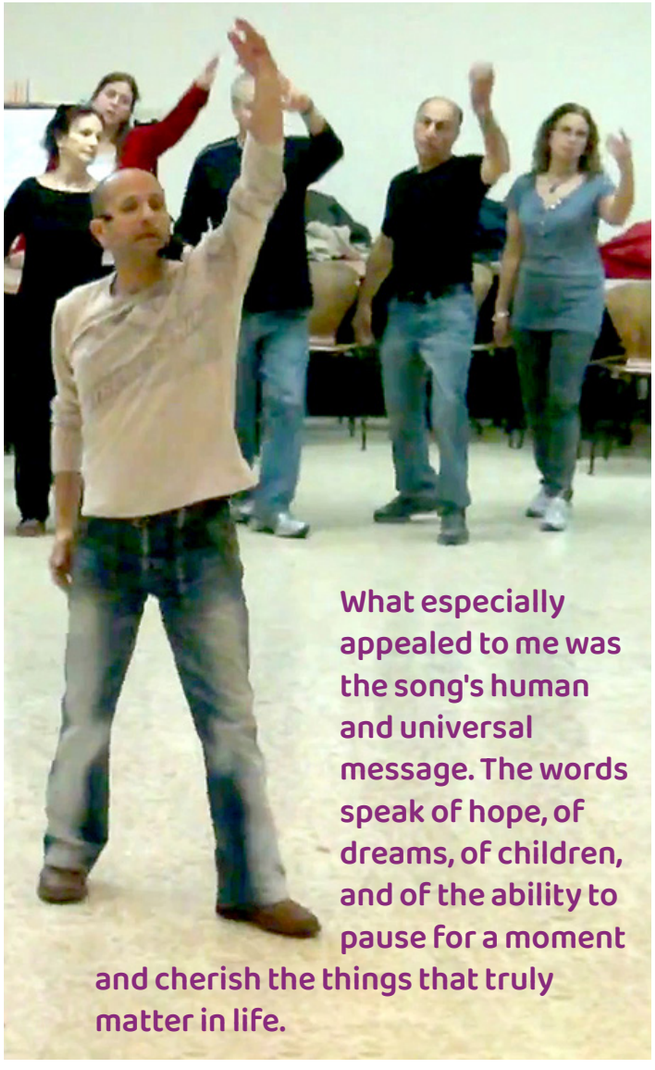
Oren Shmuel

***Oren Shmuel** has been involved in Israeli folk dance since the late 1980s. Since then, he has choreographed over 80 folk dances that have been taught and danced both in Israel and around the world.*

In his choreographic work, he often combines songs with meaning and substance, piyyutim, poems, diverse Israeli music, and ethnic-style dances. Many of his dances were born out of a personal connection to the lyrics and message of the song and an attempt to translate the spirit of the creation into an accessible and engaging movement language. His dances have been done for many years at dance sessions in Israel and in folk dance camps and communities around the world.

Alongside his activity as a choreographer, he has taught and led dance sessions in Israel and in various countries around the world, and has participated over the years in seminars, festivals, dance camps and Hishtalmuyot (workshops/training seminars) for instructors.

For him, folk dance is first and foremost a way to connect music, song lyrics and people.



I choreographed the dance "Amen La'Milim" in 1998 to the moving song of **Ofra Haza**, with lyrics and music by **Bezalel Aloni**.

When I first heard the song, I recognized something special in it. I have always believed in the power of words to influence people, and the combination of the lyrics, the melody, and the message moved me in an extraordinary way.

What especially appealed to me was the song's human and universal message. The words speak of hope, of

dreams, of children, and of the ability to pause for a moment and cherish the things that truly matter in life.

The lines: "Amen to the young children in the kindergarten" and "And if you return safely from all the wars" particularly touched me. Even today, many years after I choreographed the dance, I feel that this message remains relevant and moving.

Over the years, I have discovered that the relationship between music, lyrics, and people is one of the things that appeals to me most in choreographing folk dances. For me, the true test of a dance is not just its initial success, but its ability to continue to move and connect people many years after it was created.

When constructing the dance, I tied to translate the feeling of hope and faith contained in the song into a flowing and accessible movement language, one that will allow the dancers to connect not only to the melody but also to the meaning of the lyrics.

One of the most important moments for me in the dance is the ending. On the last word, "Amen", I chose to end with a bold stomp and a shoulder movement to the right and left. For me, this is a moment that sums up the spirit of the song – prayer, hope, gratitude, and faith.

For me, the true test of a dance is not just its initial success, but its ability to continue to move and connect people many years after it was created.

Over the years, the dance has continued to be danced in Israel and around the world. For me, the fact that it continues to engage dancers even today, almost three decades after it was created, is a great source of joy and satisfaction.

Amen La'Milim – Dance Notation

Formation: Circle
Line of direction: CCW
Meter: 4/4

Part A: Face center.

1-4 Step R to rt., cross L behind R, step R to rt. to face CCW, brush L fwd.
5-8 Step L fwd, brush R fwd, step R fwd, brush L fwd.
9-12 Face out of center (back is to center): Step L to left, cross R behind L, step L to left to face CCW, brush R fwd.
13-16 Step R fwd, brush L fwd, step L fwd, brush R fwd.
17-20 Face center: Yem. R.
21-22 Step L fwd across R bending body fwd and crossing arms fwd with hands down, touch R toes behind L.
23-24 Step back on R in place while raising body opening arms to sides and lifting L in an arc to the left.
25-28 Cross L behind R, step R to rt., cross L over R, hold.

29-32 Step R to rt., cross L behind R, step R to rt. cross L over R.
33-48 Repeat counts 17-32.

Transition: Face center.

1-4 Full turn rt. with R,L; rock back on R, fwd on L.

Part B: Face center.

1-4 Three steps fwd (R,L,R) toward center, hold.
5-8 Rock fwd on L, bwd on R; face CW (rt. shoulder to center) and step L to left, touch R toes next to L.
9-10 ½ turn in place with two steps (R,L) to end with left shoulder to center (face CCW).
11-16 Open double tcherkessia step beginning with R to rt.: Step R to rt., cross L over R. R back in place, step L to left, cross R over L, L back in place.
17-20 Step-tog-step RLR moving out of center and face slightly out, step L across R, step back on R pivoting left to face center.
21-24 Step-tog-step LRL, step R across L, step back on R.

25-28 Open mayim step moving CCW: Step R to rt., step L across R, step R to rt., step L behind R.
29-32 Repeat transition (counts 1-4)
33-64 Repeat Part B counts 1-32.

Repeat part A, Transition, part B counts 1-32, then:

Ending: Face center.

1- 28 Repeat Part B counts 1-28.
1-4 Full turn to rt. with three steps (R,L,R), hold.
5-8 Full turn to left with three steps (L,R,L) hold.
9-12 Rock back on R, fwd on L; two steps (R,L) fwd toward center.
13-18 Double tcherkessia step beginning with R across L; Step R across L, L back in place, R to rt., L across R, R back in place, L to left.
19-20 Stamp on R in place, hold; Double time tilt of shoulders toward center – rt. shoulder, then left.

Dance notation:
Honey Goldfein and Ruth Goodman

The lines: "Amen to the young children in the kindergarten" and "And if you return safely from all the wars" particularly touched me. Even today, many years after I choreographed the dance, I feel that this message remains relevant and moving.

Amen La'Milim – Amen to the Words

Lyrics and music: **Bezalel Aloni**
Singer: **Ofra Haza**

Lyrics transliteration	**Lyrics translation**
Ma nevakesh im boker or, mibein hamilim Ma nevakesh im boker or me'E-lohim Milah ktanah ohevet, milah tamah Milah shebah nimtzah et kol haneshamah	What should we ask for at morning light, among all the words? What should we ask for at morning light, from G-d? A small, loving word, an innocent word A word in which the whole soul is found
Amen La'Milim, lakavanot Amen lashirim velachalomot Amen layladim harakim shebagan Amen layamim hatovim shel kulam	Amen to the words, to the intentions Amen to the songs and to the dreams Amen to the little children in kindergarten Amen to everyone's good days
Ve'im mikol hamilchamot tashuv beshalom U've'einecha hatovot ta'ir et hayom Az nishtok beyachad et hamilim Bahen oti ahavta kol hayamim	And if you return safely from all the wars And with your good eyes you light up the day Then together we will silence all the words With which you loved me, all of the days
Amen La'Milim, lakavanot…	Amen to the words, to the intentions…
Amen layamim Amen layeladim Amen lashirim Amen La'Milim Amen!!!	Amen to the days Amen to the children Amen to the songs Amen to the words Amen!!!

Lyrics translation and transliteration by Benny Levy