

### Israeli Dance, *Specialty Track 3*

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<b>SUMMARY:</b>	Session to learn more Israeli dances and how they can be used as a tool to build community and teach about Israel and Judaism. - <i>Submitted by Erica Goldman</i>
<b>TOPICS:</b>	Camp-wide/Large Group Programs, Community Building, Dance and Movement, Global Jewish Community, Israel Programming, Jewish Culture, Jewish Values, Music and Rhythm
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVE:</b>	Participants will learn some more Israeli dances (both classics and modern ones), tips on how to teach them, ideas on how Israeli dance can be used as a ritualistic bonding activity for a camp group, and ideas on how Israeli dance can be used to teach aspects of Jewish and Israeli culture and history.
<b>AUDIENCE:</b>	Any size group of six or more; ages ten and up.
<b>LENGTH:</b>	90-120 Minutes
<b>MATERIALS NEEDED:</b>	Sound system; microphone if large group or large room
<b>SETTING SUGGESTED:</b>	Empty space with room for dancing (no furniture)

#### Session Description:

##### 1. Warm-up: Name Game

Invite participants to sit in a circle on the ground and make up a movement to perform while saying their name. Give some examples with your own name and then choose one and tell everyone to repeat it (movement and name). Invite person next to you to do the same, have everyone try it, and then put both names/movements together in sequence. Do this all the way around the circle, until everyone has done their name, stopping at various points to practice the whole sequence in order up to that point. Then do one whole round in slow motion and another round as quickly as possible. Put on a song and lead one more round without saying names but leading everyone in doing the full choreography to the rhythm of the song.

##### 2. Tzaddik Katamar

Teach the dance Tzaddik Katamar, including the terminology of the step “double tzerchessia” and do the dance with the recording of the music that starts slow and then speeds up. Point out how increasing the speed can increase the excitement, just as in Adama Vshamayim (from Session Two) and how these dances build confidence by starting slow and only increasing gradually. Point out how that was also done during the name game, and how putting different music to movements can change the feeling of the dance (as in doing the name game with saying the names vs. doing it to music without names).

Invite participants to brainstorm how they can use the idea of changing speed or music to change the emotion of an activity at camp. One example is making bunk clean-up time more fun by playing music and telling campers their movements have to match the speed and emotion of the song; counselors can then play one really fast and wild-sounding song (and allow campers to go a little crazy while cleaning) and then one really slow and melodic song (allowing them to clean up in slow-motion) etc.

### 3. Adama Vshamayim and Culture of Israel conversation

Review and dance Adama Vshamayim. Invite participants to sit down and lead a conversation about the “basic steps” of Israeli dance, where they come from, and how they mirror Israeli society. Elicit the names of these steps from participants (steps they have learned already and/or already know from Israeli dancing): Mayim, Tzerchessia, and Yemenite step. Discussion will be about the story of Mayim Mayim (discussed in Session Two) and how the “grapevine” is almost a universal step (also called “karaoke” in sports) but the narrative about the kibbutz finding water makes it “Israeli” in context; about the fact that the “tzerchessia” step comes from Russia as in fact do many Israelis (about 20% of the current population of Jews); about the fact that the “Yemenite” step comes from Yemen as do many Israelis (In 1949 and 1950, the Israeli government airlifted 49,000 persecuted Yemenite Jews out of Yemen and into the new state of Israel in a secret operation called “Operation Magic Carpet” (nickname) or “Operation on Wings of Eagles” (real name).) Somehow, these three steps come from three different places and peoples in the world yet are magically the building blocks of “Israeli” dancing; together they form something unique and different than they are on their own. This is similar to how the immigrant populations of Israel come together to form something new, an “Israeli” culture that includes aspects of all the different places the population comes from. Participants will be prompted to think of other aspects of Israeli culture that come from different places (some might know about jachnun or malawach or other Yemenite foods, some might mention challah which is Eastern European, someone might mention the Mediterranean nature of falafel, etc.)

To bring this idea back to camp, ask participants to think about how campers and camp staff may come from different parts of the country, different schools, and different family or religious traditions, yet when they come to camp they all become part of the camp culture. Some home traditions are brought directly to camp (their clothing and belongings, for example), some are blended into camp traditions (the birthday song just like it is sung at home might be part of a camp ritual that also includes banging on the tables or singing an additional song), some are only done at camp (Shabbat services or song session at camp might include totally different melodies or camp-specific songs). The camp culture is created out of all these methods, just as a country’s culture represents some aspects of its immigrant populations and some aspects that are special to that country. Tie it back to Israel and its immigrant population with the next dance.

### 4. Yalla

Teach Yalla (a dance by Israel Shiker from 2006 sung by Arash), including the terminology of the “Rona” step and point out that the song is in Farsi (the modern name for Persian, from Persia which is modern-day Iran) while the name of it (and first word of the song) is “Yalla” an Arabic word that translates roughly to “Come on!” or “Let’s go!” and which is widely used in Israel by Hebrew speakers, in Arabic by Arabic speakers, in Iran by Farsi speakers, etc.

### Wrap up:

Remind participants of the Jewish values of community embedded in Israeli dancing: It’s ok to make mistakes, everyone holds hands so they can help each other, no one is made to feel less or better than anyone else, it’s more about participation than skill, the Israeli equality ideas embedded in how we hold hands, etc. You can have a short discussion about being supportive of dancers of all abilities and make the connection to how that can play out in other areas of camp, like sports; you can also make the connection to intentionally being a supportive audience as well, for camp talent shows, melavah malkahs at some camps, etc.

### 5. You Don’t Have to Know A Dance To Do A Dance

If there’s time, lead (without teaching) a few more dances, including Tzena Tzena and Ma Navu and teach or lead some additional dances that are popular at many camps, like Neshika Turkit (pointing out it is sung in Turkish!) and/or Zodiac. Lead short wrap-up conversation in which participants can review all the key points of all three workshops, and then finish by doing any or all of the dances they’ve learned. Very last one should be one of the most accessible and upbeat ones so everyone leaves on a high note!

### **Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:**

Name Game can be used as a getting-to-know-you activity or a group bonding activity at the beginning of summer or of a new “chug” if campers don’t know each other and their names. Also very good for starting dance sessions with reluctant dancers, as it is a sitting activity and doesn’t feel like “dancing” for some kids, but then they are caught up in participating and can transition more easily into standing up dances.

Tzaddik Katamar can be used as introduction or wrap for other activity or lesson about nature, water conservation, or tree-planting in Israel, or as a discussion of Psalm 92:13 and the meaning of what it means to be “righteous”.

The Culture of Israel ideas can be expanded into larger programs that incorporate not just dance but also music, food, art, or any other aspect of Israeli culture that counselors wish to explore with campers.



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