

2003: How Israel Changed My Life

“Nice Jewish Boy” Pursues Dream of Dance in Tel Aviv

In 1971, at the age of eighteen, while other “nice Jewish boys” were struggling to find a suitable college major, I moved to Tel Aviv to pursue my dream of becoming a ballet dancer. Although I had only a year’s previous dance training, I was nevertheless accepted with open arms, first into the Inbal Yemenite (folk) Dance Troupe. Shortly thereafter, I was admitted into the Bat-Dor (ballet and modern) Dance Company. Sadly, my dance career did not last long. It was a gift given at too early an age, a present that I have nevertheless learned to appreciate over time.

Since the tender age of eighteen, I have learned that my body is my portable Israel. The word “Israel” means “struggle with God.” My body has been my struggle to learn grace and alignment with God. My body is not only the vehicle of my soul; it is my grounding. It is into this unique and special container that God chose to pour my Jewish soul, and it is through this Israel of flesh and bone that I am learning what it means to be a member of the world’s greater Jewish body.

I now am fifty years old. I take four ballet classes a week at the Academy of Ballet in San Francisco, each of them a prayer to God in my intimately private Hebrew, the body language that was first taught to me in Tel Aviv, Israel - my beloved ballet, my joyous dance with God.