

BACKGROUND:

We recognize Raya Spivak for her use of dance as therapy for the emotionally and mentally challenged. She also has given us evocative recreational dances such as *Erev Shel Shoshanim* (see the 1995 *Problem Solver*) and *Ma Na'avu* (2014 *Problem Solver*). I have not been able to verify that she created this *Yesh* or that it dates from 1948. Yitzhak Alterman composed its lyrics.

Some folks call *Yesh* a children's dance or game. I do not see a real boundary between children's games and folk dances, particularly if we define folk dances as the social dances of other peoples and other times. I would never hesitate to include *Yesh* on a folk dance program.

We recognize American folk dance teacher of teachers Sanna Longden for her work in making folk dance accessible to children and for tying together the North American folk dance movement. She began to present this *Yesh* in about 1991. Phonograph records appear to date back to 1930. Waxman (1981) described a dance similar to Longden's and implied that she had danced this or similar dances in Palestine/Israel from 1945 to 1951.

SOUND RECORDINGS:

Hed-Arzi, 14779, *Nezea Bemachol, No. 1*; A-4, *Yesh Lanu Taiesh*

James Madison University, FDP-LP1, *Jewish culture through folk dance and folklore for young children*; A-6, *Yesh Lanu Tayish*

Sanna Longden, various cassette tapes, CDs, and DVDs

FORMATION:

Longways set of 5 or 6 couples, men on one side facing women on the other; men's left shoulders to the top of the set, where the music is. As Sanna notes, the dance may be danced to live musical accompaniment and singing, in which case the phrasing is not so important. You simply dance one phrase until everyone finishes the figure. Logically, then, you may include less or more couples in your set. With simultaneous sets of different lengths or dancing at different speeds, a set that finishes a figure early may clap or mark time in place until the other sets catch up. Join hands across the set with your partner, right hand holding your partner's left hand.

BARS ACTION

4/4 Musical introduction. Different recordings may have different introductions.

1-2 No action.

1. Yesh.

1-2 Shake hands down and up 6 times and shout *Yesh!* 6 times (cts 1, 3, 1,2,3,4).

(3-4 = 1-2: sometimes this figure is repeated.)

Note from http://horawiki.org/page/Yesh_Lanu_Tayish: Most recordings have an 8-beat Figure 1. Shake hands and shout 5 or 6 times (omitting beats 2, 4, and maybe 8). Often "va" is substituted on beat 6, giving "Yesh; yesh; yesh-va-yesh".

2. Slide down the set and up. First couple retains handhold and stretches joined hands out to sides, shoulder-high. Other couples let go hands and step back (quickly!).

3-4 First couple dances 8 slide motifs down the inside of the set to the bottom, man starting onto right foot; woman starting onto left foot.

Slide motif (4 motifs per bar): step to side onto leading foot (ct 1), leap beside leading foot onto following foot (ct &). End a sequence of slide motifs with weight on both feet.

5-6 First couple dances 8 slide motifs up the inside of the set, returning to first place. Man starts onto left foot; woman starts onto right foot. Let go hands, and all end in places.

(7-10 = 3-6; sometimes this figure is repeated.) Turn to face up the set.

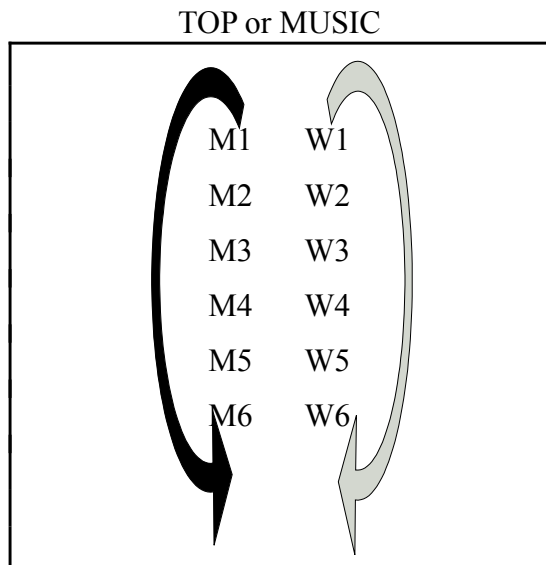
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Yesh Lanu Taish (concluded)

3. Skip around and arch. Facing up the set:

7-10 First man leads men's line outward and down the outside of the set to the bottom, while first woman leads women's line outward and down the outside of the set to the bottom. First couple meets in last couple's place and joins hands across in an arch high overhead, right hand holding partner's left hand. The other couples dance under the arch with inside (man's right; woman's left) hands joined and dance up the set to new places: first, second, third, etc., respectively. Couple 1 remains at the bottom of the set.

Dance bars 1-10 to the end of the music with a new Couple 1 each time, singing:



Yesh lanu taish, l'taish yesh zakan There is to us a goat, to the goat there is a beard
v'lo arba raglayim, v'gam zanaf katan. and to him four feet, and also a small tail. La la la ...

Yesh lo karnayim, karnayim lingo'ach. There are to him horns, horns to butt with.
Yesh lo telafayim, liv'ot velivro'ach. There are to him hooves, to kick and to run away. La la la ...

Larry Denenberg's remarkable *HoraWiki* (http://horawiki.org/page/Yesh_Lanu_Tayish, accessed Jan. 20, 2020) added this information about the song:

The lyrics were written by Yitzchak Alterman -- father of influential Israeli poet, playwright, and journalist Nathan Alterman -- as an aid for children's Hebrew instruction. The five stanzas were used to teach the distinction between "tayish" (male goat, first three stanzas), "ez" (female goat, fourth stanza), and "g'di" (kid, fifth stanza). The song appears in Alterman's book *Parable Games: Songs, Games, and Plays for Kindergartens and Schools*, published in Vilna in 1913 and again in Warsaw in 1922.

The lyrics were sung to several different folk tunes. The tune commonly used for the dance today includes a refrain between the stanzas that is often sung just "la la la" but sometimes with words: "with a stick, with a ruler, with whatever comes to hand". How did these lines, which don't appear in Alterman's poem, become attached to the song?

The generally accepted explanation is that a parody version of Alterman's lyrics was created sometime after the song became popular in Israel. Some say that it was part of a Purim spiel (www.plaot.com/document/62,0,184.aspx, accessed Jan. 20, 2020), others credit "the innocent children of Israel" (www.makorrishon.co.il/nrg/online/1/ART/963/909.html, accessed Jan. 20, 2020). The stanza of the parody is:

"We have a rebbe, the rebbe has a beard, and he has four students, and he beats them..." followed by the two lines about stick and ruler. Those last two lines then spread widely because Alterman's lyrics don't supply words for the la-la-la refrain in the usual tune (A commenter at Nathan Alterman's site is indignant about the insult to Alterman by attributing to him this sentiment of rabbinical violence.).

End of **YESH LANU TAISH**.