



**מעריב**



# "אמרתי לא

# לספילברג"

# "I Said No To Spielberg"

When Steven Spielberg's studio offered Joyce Boll a job in Hollywood, she refused to leave New York. A few years later, she was flying to a new life in Israel. The successful producer who worked with Oprah Winfrey and David Letterman decided to trade the American dream for the Zionist dream. She has no regrets, "This is my home; this is where I want to raise a family."

Eli Bardenstein

# MAARIV

צילום: אריק פורט



# UP AND COMING PRODUCER **מפיקה** **שולה**

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Eli Bardenstein // Photographer: Arik Sultan

**A** person wakes up in the morning and decides to make Aliyah. This is not just any person, but a woman at the height of her career, who rejected a great offer from Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks Studio. She says goodbye to Oprah Winfrey, gives up a great offer from billionaire Richard Branson (the owner of the Virgin media and music conglomerate), and decides to move to Israel. "I want children who are macho, proud and strong, not like the Jewish kids in America who seem wimpy," says Joyce Boll, an energetic blonde, who is a veteran producer in the American movie, television and new-media industry. Two years ago, she left her amazing New York apartment and enormous salary for life in Israel. She won't reveal her age, but she is open about her passion. "Israel is my home," she announces in her central Tel Aviv apartment. "The Jewish People are my people. I have come full circle and returned after thousands of years of exile to Israel and this is the only place where I want to start a family. Now that my career is established and I don't have to work 90 hour weeks, I came to the realization that all these years, I was just running away from myself and here is where I am meant to live and to raise proud Jewish children who will call me 'Ima' and not 'Mother'. To me, this has a lot of power." In her two years here, Boll has managed to

become part of the teaching faculty at the Bezalel School of Design, to be the chief producer of the Israeli animation company Crew 972 and to produce an international animation festival in local cinemateques. Now she is deciding between job offers in the field of 3D animation and starting a business as an independent producer in Israel. For Boll, the American dream has turned into the Israeli dream, and she is certain that even in a chaotic environment that we have in Israel at times, "I will know how to make money...My dream is here and I am living it. I want to bring business opportunities in the areas of animation and entertainment to Israel."

### Thrown Out of Synagogue

Joyce was born to a poor Eastern European Jewish couple. Her father arrived as a child joining the throngs of immigrants to New York City. She grew up in an Italian-Catholic neighborhood, her family was one of the only Jewish families around. In the public school that she attended, knives and drugs were common among the students, including Joyce.

When her mother caught her smoking a joint at the age of 14, she gave her a disappointed look and said, "I thought that you were a leader, now it seems that you are just part of

**During her first to Israel Boll met with combat soldiers. "I did not know a word in Hebrew, so I sang 'David Melech Yisrael,' the only song that I remembered. The soldiers joined me and I thought to myself, 'This is amazing. We are so different yet one ancient song connects us, it was then that I understood where I belong."**

the flock." This remark hit Boll like a lightning bolt and for the rest of high school she did not go near drugs. She celebrated her bat mitzvah only recently; when she was young, the local rabbi drove her out of the synagogue when he was fed up with arguing with the rebellious Joyce during Hebrew school classes.

Boll was the first in her family to go to college. "I knew that I was sharp, and there is no way that I wouldn't succeed in life." In order to pay for her studies Joyce worked "about 500 jobs at once." She was a bartender, a waitress, a guinea pig for experiments on hygiene products and worked the counter at a jewelry store. It was there that she met George, her Lebanese husband, whom she separated from when he demanded that she convert. Afterwards she was involved in political campaigns and worked as a DJ at the college radio station.

By the age of 20, she already had her foot in the door in the world of show biz. She landed an internship job in the legal department of NBC. In the following months, she was exposed to the tough rules of the entertainment game, and went on to be a production assistant at an ad agency and then at a large post-production company. At the age of 25 she got her big break, a job at National Video Center studios, at the time the largest privately held production studio in America. Two years later she became manager of Sony Classics, where she worked with

Bobby McFerrin, the Three Tenors ("Placido Domingo was a big flirt,") and violinists Isaac Stern and Yitzhak Perlman ("They were always telling dirty jokes,") among others. After establishing herself professionally, Boll made her first trip to Israel, where she felt right at home. "When I was 18 my mother didn't want me to go. She knew that if I went, I would not come back." During that visit she met her distant relatives in Netanya and combat soldiers at the Dead Sea. "I did not know a word in Hebrew, so I sang 'David Melech Yisrael,' the only song that I remembered from my grandmother. The soldiers joined me and I thought to myself, "This is amazing. We are so different yet one ancient song connects us, connects this entire tribe." It was then that I understood where I belong."

### Not Leaving the City

Boll returned to New York where she quit her job at Sony and opened her own production company. Within 3 weeks, she was closing million dollar deals and was riding the wave. She was producing promos for the big television networks and got to work with Bill Cosby ("He is the only one that I let down my professional guard with. I was like a little girl with him.") She also shot promos with David Letterman and other celebrities. Boll decided that she wanted to do more than

produce promos and explored new horizons on the internet which was beginning to develop at the time. Because of her reputation, the Virgin Corporation turned to her to establish their New-Media department. "I got an amazing apartment in London and lived like a queen while I was overseeing the development of e-commerce for their record company." After moving back to New York, she got a job at Oprah Winfrey's new women's network, Oxygen Media, in charge of production. It was there that she briefly met Oprah Winfrey. "It's amazing to be near her. She seems so deeply good hearted, like a rabbi." As before, Joyce didn't want to continue as an employee despite the high salary she was offered. "I didn't want anyone to tell me how much money I would make or to limit my opportunities. I also did not want to get stuck and turn into a mid-level decision maker." A few months later, she was contacted regarding a job at Steven Spielberg's movie and television studios, Dreamworks, in Los Angeles, but Boll refused. "I would not agree to leave New York. Los Angeles does not have a subway, it is too far from Europe and you can't walk to work like in New York."

### Hollywood is Watching Israel

The turning point was the massive 9/11 terrorist attack on the Twin Towers. In

synagogue on that traumatic night, Boll met a son of Israeli Yordim who was born in America. They volunteered together, helping the emergency workers. Over the next four years, she came on many trips to Israel to be with a man who she thought would be the one with whom she would start a Jewish family. But the two separated and the dream shattered. "I felt like an empty canvas. I was broken hearted. At that moment I realized that I accomplished all that I wanted to professionally, and now it was time to make Aliyah to Israel." While downloading the Aliyah application from the Nefesh B'Nefesh organization, Boll received a surprising phone call. On the line was an agent offering her work in Israel at a 3D animation company that was interested in opening a branch in this country. "There was no doubt in my mind that this was a sign from G-d that I have to make Aliyah." Ultimately, Boll decided not to accept the offer, but the phone call sparked an interest in the Israeli animation market. In May 2006, Joyce landed in Tel Aviv and went directly to an executive position in a local animation company. At the same time, she developed local contacts and began developing opportunities for joint ventures with big clients from New York. "In recent years, the animation market in Hollywood started showing an interest in production outside of the US. Right now,

they are focused on Asia but there are complications because of differences in mentality. Here, an American producer can explain in a second what he wants." "I know that Hollywood is watching Israel and I am sure that we can establish a thriving animation industry in Israel. I can bring international clients here. Don't forget that I was already a pioneer in these fields and I made a lot of money for myself and my clients. And I can do it here, too."

"I'll know how to make money here too."  
Joyce Boll

### Background: The Nefesh B'Nefesh Organization

## 14,000 Made Aliyah in 5 Years

Nefesh B'Nefesh is an independent Aliyah organization that brings in most of the Olim from North America. Since its establishment 5 years ago, it has assisted more than 14,000 Olim from the US, Canada and England to move to Israel, some in cooperation with The Jewish Agency. One of the chairmen of the organization is former Ambassador to Washington, Danny Ayalon. The organization gives most of the Olim who receive assistance grants of \$20,000 per family as an incentive to make Aliyah, as well as help with logistical, economic and social problems that Olim experience during the absorption process in Israel. According to the organization's statistics, 99% of the Olim whom they helped bring in have stayed in Israel.