

‘New Ways’ Hits Home

I was just rereading your Sept. 21 article, “New Ways to Observe the Holiest Day,” which described contemporary approaches to Yom Kippur observance for secular Israelis. Author Ben Sales noted the popularity of Yom Kippur eve attendance, including *Kol Nidre*, poetry by Yehuda Amichai, a song by Leonard Cohen and readings from Abraham Joshua Heschel and Hannah Senesh. I was struck by the similarities of these new Israeli approaches and the way we do things in our *chavurah*, since we are oriented toward Jews who are secular, plus synagogue attendees who are eclectic.

We too observe the holiday on Yom Kippur eve. Our program includes readings by some of the same authors (Heschel, Senesh). Whereas in the past we’ve listened to Cantor Yosele Rosenblatt sing *Kol Nidre*, this year we heard the Johnny Mathis version. We practice non-traditional takes on the *Al Chet*. Ours emphasize forgiving ourselves for last year’s negative behaviors and a review of positive behaviors in which we engaged over the past year. The latter exercise is also physical and fun, involving the lifting of a parachute by everyone in attendance.

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