



Siddur Masorti FAQs

1) Will this siddur alter our services?

No. At OVS we observe Sephardic nusach (ritual practice). While most of our practices stem from the practices of our ancestors on the Isle of Rhodes, over the years we have incorporated some practices from other Sephardic communities around the world. This siddur is designed to be “pan-sephardic” in that it includes various practices of the Sephardic communities. Our entire liturgy is included in the pages of this siddur in an easily accessible fashion so our services will continue to be the ones we have all grown up with and/or fallen in love with over the years.

2) Why are we choosing to use a new siddur at this time?

Congregational leadership has been looking into new siddurim for over ten years. The De Sola Pool Siddur (blue book we’ve been using for Zoom Friday Night Services) has been a hallmark for decades, however, its use of non-modern English has long been a distraction. Other siddurim have many positive qualities, yet lack the beauty and accessibility of the new siddur selected. As an evolving community made up of various backgrounds, and levels of familiarity with Hebrew and prayer, we have been looking for a siddur that meets our needs, varying levels and values for some time. When we learned about the weekday version of the siddur, we were excited to learn more about the possibility of beginning to use it for services at OVS. After discovering that the Shabbat and Festival Siddur had not yet been written, we were happy to have a seat at the table in the development of this new siddur.

3) How does this siddur relate to our strategic plan?

In our strategic plan, we discussed the needs of our community to have a more accessible English in our prayers, together with transliterations, to allow for everyone to participate. This siddur has a modern English translation of every word together with a transliteration of every word to engage our whole community. But that is not where it ends. We also learned in working on our strategic plan that we are an evolving community looking to create a more equal prayer experience for men and women and this is the first Sephardic Siddur to have that value in mind.

4) Why this siddur?

In evaluating this siddur we looked for content, philosophy and ease of use. The content of this siddur is the Sephardic liturgy for Shabbat and Festivals. The philosophy matches OVS’s unique Sephardic modern outlook. This siddur is also simple to use with text written in clear and large letters that flow wonderfully from page to page.

5) How will I use this siddur?

If you are a participant that relies only on the Hebrew, you will use it the same way that you have used all our siddurim in the past. If you are a participant who struggles with the Hebrew language, you will now be able to follow every word of the service in the transliterations. The page will be divided into four columns. The first from left to right will be commentary and background info on the prayers and service. The second will be the Hebrew. The third will be an English translation and the fourth will be the transliteration.

6) What does egalitarian mean?

Egalitarian is the word used to designate something as being equal to all people. This siddur has a uniquely gender-neutral approach in a few important ways. This siddur has a uniquely egalitarian approach in a few important ways. The first is that *birchot hashachar* (morning blessings) which traditionally include prayers thanking God for not making us women, not making non-Jews and not making us slaves, which follows a different tradition found in a siddur of a modern-day Sephardic authority, Rabbi Isaac Sassoon, that places the three negative prayers into positive ones. The other major difference is that in the Amidah, the siddur provides the congregation with the ability to add the matriarchs into the prayers, along with the patriarchs. While we will not be utilizing this here, we are pleased that people will be able to use this modern innovation in their personal prayers. The greatest “egalitarian” move of this siddur is to adhere to the established Jewish philosophy that God is genderless and as such this siddur utilizes non-gendered language in talking about God.

7) Will we need to purchase and bring our own Siddur to services?

We will continue the OVS tradition of providing members and guests attending our services with copies of the new Siddur for use during services. However, if a member wishes to purchase a copy for their home and personal use, as part of our community partnership, OVS members will receive discounted pricing on their individual purchases of the prayerbook. Details on pricing will be available in the fall.

8) How can I sponsor a Siddur in honor or memory of someone?

A Siddur can be sponsored with a donation in the amount of \$54 or greater. A bookplate will be placed in the Siddur to reflect the donation.