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# The Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur, A Hebrew/English Prayer Book With Commentary By Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (Hebrew Edition)



## Synopsis

The Koren Mesorat HaRav Siddur is the first complete, Orthodox prayer book with commentary by the seminal scholar and leader, The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. The Siddur presents Rabbi Soloveitchik's exceptional insights on prayer, which have been adapted from his writings, public lectures, and classes. It is complemented by an elegant presentation in the renowned tradition of Koren Publishers Jerusalem, and an eloquent English translation and introduction by the esteemed Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks. Published in cooperation with the Orthodox Union.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 1304 pages

Publisher: Koren Publishers Jerusalem; Nusach Ashkenaz edition (November 1, 2011)

Language: Hebrew

ISBN-10: 9653012762

ISBN-13: 978-9653012769

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1.7 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #735,608 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Prayerbooks](#) #1092 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings](#)

## Customer Reviews

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993) was one of the twentieth century's leading and most influential Talmudic scholars, Jewish philosophers, and religious leaders. A descendant of the Lithuanian Soloveitchik rabbinic dynasty, The Rav, as he was widely known, served as Rosh Yeshiva of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University, where he ordained nearly 2,000 rabbis over the course of almost half a century. Rabbi Soloveitchik advocated excellence in both Torah learning and Western, secular scholarship, as well as involvement in the broader community.

1. It's one of the only Siddurim where you don't have to keep going back and forth during the service. The flow of the book follows the flow of Tefilah.  
2. The Rav's comments are so beautiful and to the point.  
3. Koren's typeface communicates the feeling of davening as a modern traditional Jew.

Excellent!

Product description was perfect, price was perfect and delivery was perfect. A perfect transaction

This new siddur has excellent commentary and a clear type style for that part which is in Hebrew. The English translations are clear and meaningful.

This siddur has commentary, valid translations, attractive font. If a "but," thin paper. A good addition to any Siddur library.

This thing is really, really heavy. I legitimately can't lift it for an entire service. I'd go for the thinner edition next time.

This is a good book what I find bothersome is the small font and thereby I sold my copy of this book. If they came out with larger font size I would probably buy it.

This book is a splendid addition both for people seeking an extensive commentary to their siddur (prayer book) and those who want to know more about the thinking of the famous and esteemed Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Rabbi Soloveitchik (1903-1993), the scion of a famous highly respected family, was the Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) of Yeshiva University, which ordained more than a thousand Orthodox rabbis, and was the spiritual leader of the Rabbinical Council of America, the organization of Orthodox rabbis. Many Orthodox rabbis considered him to be their spiritual leader and even today, about a decade after his death, many rabbis continue to quote him and follow his practices. Needless to say, people being people, not all Orthodox Jews agree with Rabbi Soloveitchik's world view. Rabbi Soloveitchik was somewhat mystical in his approach to Judaism and to life generally. He insisted that the views of the mystic other-worldly Nachmanides are correct and used them in interpreting the Bible, Midrashim, and the siddur. He rejected the views of the rational Moses Maimonides (in Maimonides' introduction to Perek Helek) when he interpreted the Torah. He insisted that Torah events as well as their Midrashic interpretations happened as described, literally, and should not be understood figuratively, no matter how fanciful they may appear. Jacob, for example, actually fought with an angel, and this was not a dream as Maimonides posits. He also insisted that Jews must obey all of the ancient commands, both biblical and

rabbinical without any deviation or change because of modern situations and human needs. Thus, he insisted that Jews may not change the agunah law that only a husband may give a divorce decree, which results in hundreds of wives being unable to remarry because their husbands, although separated from them and sometimes even remarried, refuse to give their wives a Jewish divorce. One famous critique of his method is contained in Rabbi Dr. David Hartman's recent book *From Defender to Critic*, where Hartman describes why he rejects the Soloveitchik approach. But whether one agrees with Rabbi Soloveitchik or not, readers of this extensive siddur and commentary will find much that will provoke them to think more about prayers, Judaism, laws, customs, and life generally. This siddur contains, among many other things, an introductory essay by Rabbi Soloveitchik's son in law, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein who quotes his father in law saying: "Prayer means sacrifice, unrestricted offering of the whole self, the returning to God of body and soul, everything one possesses and cherishes.... God the Almighty sometimes wills man to place himself, like Isaac of old, on the altar, to light the fire and to be consumed as a burnt offering." Rabbi Jonathan Sacks prepared the English translation for this and other Koren siddurs. He describes Rabbi Soloveitchik and his thinking in sixteen pages. Julius Berman, the Chairman of the OU Press Commission, Dr. Arnold Lustiger, the editor of this volume, Menachem Dov Genach, the General Editor of OU Press, and Matthew Miller, the Publisher of Koren Press, also add essays about and insights to Rabbi Soloveitchik. Rabbi Soloveitchik had his own customs concerning the prayer service and this volume offers twenty-eight pages describing many of them. For example, while most siddurs have the opening words of the kaddish as *yitgadal v'yitkadash*, he pronounced them *yitgadeil v'yitkadeish*. The following are a few examples of his commentary: Commenting upon the Shema, "Listen, Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord is One," Rabbi Soloveitchik writes: "The commandment of reading the Shema involves both the act of reciting a series of words as well as maintaining the proper intention, namely, the acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven when reciting them." Discussing the Amidah, the first formal prayer composed millennia ago, he asks how can man approach God "and list his petty, insignificant needs? Would he dare act in this way before a king of flesh and blood?" He replies that the only reason we can do so is because of "the precedent of our forefathers ... (who) established the very institution of prayer." "Why does a prayer state "Blessed is the Lord from His place"? Isn't God everywhere? This teaches that God is not transcendent; He is present everywhere and at all times. "We live and experience God in His full immediacy." (Some may see the words "from his place" indicating a specific locality and that the words do not suggest everywhere.) There is no command for Jews to go to Jerusalem on the Shabbat, as there is for the festivals: "On Shabbat Shekhinah (God's presence) knocks on the door.

All we have to do is let Her (sic) in." (Some might see this comment, stating a need to go to Jerusalem during holidays to experience God, as contradicting the previous commentary that states that God is present at all times and everywhere.) The siddur concludes with a transliteration of the mourner's kaddish. This placement makes it easy for mourners who have difficulty reading Hebrew to find the kaddish and read it. Just prior to this Kaddish, there are over a hundred pages that explain the significance of the synagogue, many prayers, customs, rules, and special activities and prayers associated with certain days. In sum, this siddur is comprehensive, a veritable high-level course on Judaism and Jewish prayer as it was understood by one of its great leaders.

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