

Using a Transliterated Siddur: with Siddur Eit Ratzon One Congregant's Positive Experience

While I am very spiritual and very much a believer in God, I sure wasn't getting the warm feeling from services that other people professed to feel. I saw a sample copy **Siddur Eit Ratzon** in 2005. I was so impressed I immediately put my order in for a copy. The English was so friendly, the translations were 'user friendly', and the transliteration was so readable. I feel like someone was holding my hand as I read the book. **For the first time in nearly 70 years, I could go to a Shabbat service and follow along with the leaders.**

Now in 2013, I can read the English translation in a new, refreshing way with language I understand. I can be a part of the Torah Service without being afraid I will make a mistake. I can sing the responses. I can follow the transliterated Hebrew as the readers read it aloud. What I've written doesn't even begin to describe what I feel like when I go to services. It's like *turned the light on* for me, where I've been in the dark for so long.

My name is Esther Rochel bat Yosef ha Kohen. That's me, Nancy Kalef. I was born in the 1930s. My parents were struggling, like so many others at the end of the Depression. They couldn't afford to live in the "Jewish" part of Detroit, so we lived near Greenfield and Joy Road, where they were able to buy their first home for \$5,000. I went to Parkman Elementary, Tappan Intermediate, and Mackenzie High School. Unfortunately, I had all non-Jewish friends.

I didn't know about Hebrew School, Shul, Temple or any other Jewish things, other than that we went to my father's sister's home for Jewish holidays. My uncle read things in Hebrew, which I didn't understand, they drank wine and blessed bread, and then we got to eat. I mostly remember washing lots of dishes.

When I was in 10th grade, and was grown up enough to travel on three buses to get to Temple Israel, my parents enrolled me in Sunday School.

I learned the Reform way to pray in Temple. The only Hebrew I could say was the first line of the Shema. I probably could sing a little bit in Hebrew, although I really don't remember much. I graduated from Temple Israel High School in 1951. It's hard to believe that was **62 years ago**.

My Father always said he was a Kohan. When I would ask how he knew, he would say because that's what his Father always said to him. Evidently my Grandfather told my Dad that he was never to go to a cemetery. I didn't understand why, and I'm not so sure my Dad understood it either. It wasn't until many years later that I learned about the Kohanim and the Priestly Tribe. My Father said that his ancestors in Russia were

aristocracy. I never met my Grandfather, and only saw my Grandmother about three times in my life. The subject of Kohanim never came up.

The years between 1951 when I graduated high school and 2005 when I was a member of Congregation Beth Ahm and started using Siddur Eit Ratzon were a blur of resentment and misunderstanding. It was a painful time, Jewishly speaking. I married two Jewish men, gave birth to a beautiful daughter who was educated in B'nai David's Hebrew School. She has always been way ahead of me in Jewish learning. At that time, I even had a few lessons in Hebrew and I learned what a shin, mem, lamed and a few other letters looked like. I could then, and still can, to this day, follow Hebrew ... if the reader isn't going really fast.

My husband, Manny and I moved to Beth Ahm in 1995, when B'nai David closed. Lovely shul, nice people for the three or four times we came to shul each year. Then Manny's father passed away and he came to minyan every night. I still felt outside of the loop, but came to services once in a while. Everyone was very friendly to me, because by then they knew Manny pretty well.

Then, in 2005, Nancy Kaplan introduced me to a new Siddur called Siddur Eit Ratzon. I saw that the Hebrew and the transliteration was on the **same page, line for line**. I could actually follow the service by watching for Hebrew responses that were in bold letters. If there was a long prayer (such as the Amidah, I could take the time to read the English text. It wasn't even archaic English. The translation for **Adonai Elo•hei•chem Emet** is translated to, "Adonai is **Your** God and that is true! -Wow, this teaching is so amazing". I immediately fell in love with this new prayer book. Besides that, there are beautiful **Meditations** in the book, and in fact, the meditations I have read on Sisterhood Shabbat the last few years have come from Siddur Eit Ratzon.

So do you feel like I used to feel? It is not a 'shanda' to not know Hebrew! Many of us sing responses by rote. I knew some of the responses from attending services over the years, but I never knew where I was in the service until someone pointed out what page we were on. I've always revered God and what He means to me, but I never felt like I was a part of the Congregation.

If the congregation is reading a long portion of the service, I can follow the transliteration, or read the English, or go to a beautiful Meditation and find my source of comfort in a different way. I finally have a real appreciation for my Jewish roots.

Here's the "Bottom Line":

Nancy Kaplan and I are committed to mentoring anyone who is interested in knowing how to navigate Siddur Eit Ratzon. I encourage you to look at the Beth Ahm website for more background information: www.newsiddur.org. If you want more information from me, NancyKalef@comcast.net or from Nancy Kaplan nancyellen879@att.net, contact us either by email or phone. We will be honored to be of service to you.