

Nearly 75 years before “Armistice Day¹” was established by Congress and 91 years before Congress renamed the National Holiday Veteran’s Day and only 4 ½ months after the battle of Gettysburg,², Abraham Lincoln gave his famous “Gettysburg Address” at the dedication of the Soldiers National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. At the great Gettysburg battle over 172,000 soldiers joined in battle and 7,500 Union and Confederate soldiers (American’s) died. President Lincoln’s words, written 147 years ago, on November 19, 1863 still reverberate with the themes of our modern day Veteran’s day remembrance, especially in the third paragraph of his speech:

“But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, *but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*”

This coming Thursday November 11, Veterans Day is intended to thank and honor all those living Veterans who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime; to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who served - not only those who died - have sacrificed and done their duty which is in contrast to Memorial Day which is set aside is as a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of wounds sustained in battle.

As I hope all here will say thank you to our veterans this Thursday, Veteran’s day 2010, I would offer this prayer with words that certainly not as eloquent as President Lincoln’s, for us and our nearly 23 million living veterans who have served our country during World War II, Korea, the Cold War, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Desert Shield, and our current ongoing conflicts within Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom

¹ Veterans Day, which will be observed this coming Thursday November 11 (On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day in the eleventh month of the year 1918, an armistice to end World War I, the ‘war to end all wars,’ was signed), was originally called “Armistice Day” when Congress created November 11 as a federal holiday to recognize the end of World War I.

² In 1954, Congress renamed the holiday “Veterans Day” to honor all veterans.

Master of the Universe,³

As we are gathered here today and approach veteran's day, our thoughts are of the living men and women who have served our nation in times of war, truce, and peace.

We stand before you, grateful for the dedication of these 'heroes who say they weren't heroes, but say they just did their duty' by serving with pride on their surface ships; under the sea in their submarines; on foot, in tanks, or armored vehicles, on battlefields or parade grounds; in command posts, headquarter units, hospitals, or supply depots; in missile silos; or in their aircraft.

We pray for those veterans who were exposed to combat and those who served in non-combat positions. May their willingness to serve their nation continue to enhance their lives and our lives in many positive ways.

We pray for those who have served our nation and have laid down their lives to protect and defend our freedom.

We pray for those who have fought, whose spirits and bodies are scarred by war, whose nights are haunted by memories too painful for the light of day. We pray that our leaders, our legislators, and all Americans will ensure these veterans who have returned from many conflicts throughout the world over these many years receive the medical and psychological care they deserve. We also pray that your healing and comforting presence is experienced by the families and loved ones who have suffered or are suffering with them.

We pray for mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, daughters, and sons who mourn the death of a U.S. soldier, sailor, marine, or airmen they love.

We pray for those who serve us now in Iraq and Afghanistan and throughout the world, and especially for those in harms way. Please protect them, spread over them your shelter of peace, guide them with your good council, shield them from danger and from their enemies, shelter them in the shadow of your wings, guard their going and their coming, grant them life and peace now and always, and bring them home safely to their families and loved ones.

We pray that all of us gathered here and the people of the United States gratefully acknowledge and constantly remember our soldiers and their family's sacrifice that allow us to go about our daily routines with normality and without any undue or additional sacrifice, while their lives are anything but normal or routine and constantly in a state of sacrifice.

We pray for the President and his advisors, law-givers, judges, and all those who exercise just and rightful authority and are entrusted with the futures of American, Iraqi, and Afghan citizens and soldiers. Give them the wisdom and integrity imbued in our Torah and the strength to make the just decisions directly impacting these people today and tomorrow. Give our elected leaders and their advisors the ability to distinguish between 'wars of choice' and 'wars of necessity' and the wisdom to make a decision based on necessity and not vengeance, as the consequences of their decision of entering into a war will impact future generations of veterans and their families.

Finally, we pray for veterans, for all who are in the service of our country in the active duty forces, National Guard, and Reserve, for America, and for the peoples of the world. We pray that you Adonai inspire the leaders

³ Combinations of words and poetry of Susan Kramer, Rev. Scott Elliot, Siddur Sim Shalom, Prayer Book for the Armed Forces, <http://blog.beliefnet.com/astrologicalmusings/2008/11/a-prayer-for-veterans-day.htm#ixzz0zSubtXU>

of the world so they will bring us and the future generations of veterans to the day when “nation will not threaten nation, and all the inhabitants of the earth will not again know war.”

Let us say amen.

” and as prophets have written “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; to the day when nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they experience war anymore.”

Composed by Mike Baum
Blessing theme: Veteran’s Day