

Dear Friend,

As we prepare to begin the Shabbat that immediately precedes the fast of the 17th of Tammuz, Medinat Yisrael is facing its most serious internal crisis since its rebirth as a modern state. Recognizing that the Beit haMikdash was destroyed and our long exile caused by Sinat Chinam, groundless hatred, Edah would like to suggest that all of us, no matter what positions we hold about the upcoming disengagement, have a special Kavvanah in mind this Shabbat as we recite the Tefilla l'Shlom haMedinah, the Prayer for the State of Israel. We encourage you to print it out and read it to yourself silently before reciting the Tefilla, and/or give it to your Rabbi with the suggestion that it be recited publicly.

A KAVVANAH BEFORE RECITING TEFILLA L'SHLOM HAMEDINAH

At this fateful moment in our history, in addition to asking God to keep Israel safe from its many external enemies, this Shabbat, and in the coming weeks, we need to also pray for peace within our own nation and our own people, whether in Israel or the diaspora. Nothing could be more important.

2000 years ago the entire might of the Roman empire was arrayed against us, yet we are taught that everything we had built was taken away not because of our external enemies, not by dint of Rome's military superiority, but rather because of Sinat Achim – not because of a mistaken military strategy or government policy, but because we were not able to respect and love each other. We allowed ourselves to think that those we disagreed with were our enemies, and because we were blind to the values we shared with them and were not able to find what truth there was in their words, we convinced ourselves that it was allowable to blame, to demonize, and to hate. And so all we had built was lost, and our long exile began. It is now up to us - all of us - to prevent such a tragedy from happening to Am Yisrael again.

The Midrash Agur says that "The world continues to exist only by the merit of those who refrain from the violence of words and deeds in time of conflict." It is relatively easy to find merit in others, to be Dan l'Kaf Zechut, when issues being discussed aren't life-or-death issues. But when we see the future of Eretz Yisrael and the unity of Am Yisrael as being at stake, it takes much more effort to see our fellow Jews as brothers and sisters instead of as enemies, and to treat them accordingly in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

As we recite Tefila l'Shlom haMedina this Shabbat, let us pray fervently that this spirit of restraint and self-control continues to prevail among all of us, and by the merit of all those among our people who refrain from violence and do not succumb to Sinat Achim at this terribly difficult moment, may Hashem truly "spread over Israel his Sukkan of peace."