

Out of the Depths:

A Yom Kippur Prayer for Those Affected by Famine in the Horn of Africa

As we gather this Yom Kippur, we remember the 12 million people in the Horn of Africa—in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti—who are suffering from acute food shortages and malnutrition. Although drought is the immediate cause of the famine, it is exacerbated by decades of conflict, poor governance and inequality. Let us take a moment to pray for the well-being of the people of the region and for the wisdom and strength to help respond effectively to both the short-term and long-term challenges they face.

Avinu Malkeinu, our Parent and our Sovereign,ⁱ we stand before you on this day of judgment and implore you to remember, inscribe and seal Your children living in the Horn of Africa in the Book of Life.ⁱⁱ Remove the plague against them; may they not perish from thirst and hunger.ⁱⁱⁱ Out of the depths, hear their cries^{iv}—do not abandon them and do not forsake them, O God of deliverance.^v

On this day of repentance, may we, the members of this holy congregation, open our ears to the cries of those in need as we hear the wail of the *shofar* and soften our hearts to others' suffering as we strike our chests in penitence. As we commit to repentance, prayer and *tzedakah*^{vi} in order to better our own lives, give us the courage, the compassion and the conviction to use our voices, our power and our resources to save the lives of others. *Melech Chafetz BaChayim*^{vii}—God who desires life—may we join together to support the people of the Horn of Africa so that they may find justice, peace, security and prosperity in the year to come.^{viii} In this hour when the gates are closing, hear our voices and accept our prayer with mercy and favor, and let us say: Amen.^{ix}

ⁱ From the Avinu Malkeinu prayer, recited after the repetition of the Amida on Yom Kippur and on other occasions

ⁱⁱ From the conclusion of the Amida when recited from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur

ⁱⁱⁱ From the Unetaneh Tokef prayer, recited as a part of the repetition of the Mussaf Amida on Yom Kippur

^{iv} Psalm 130:1, recited as a part of the Shacharit service between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

^v Psalms 27:9, recited at morning and evening services during the month leading up to the High Holidays

^{vi} From the Unetaneh Tokef prayer, recited as a part of the repetition of the Mussaf Amida on Yom Kippur

^{vii} From the addition to the Amida when recited from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur

^{viii} From the concluding Neilah service on Yom Kippur

^{ix} From the Slichot service recited in preparation for and during Yom Kippur



American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice. AJWS is dedicated to alleviating poverty, hunger and disease among the people of the developing world regardless of race, religion or nationality. Through grants to grassroots organizations, volunteer service, advocacy and education, AJWS fosters civil society, sustainable development and human rights for all people, while promoting the values and responsibilities of global citizenship within the Jewish community.