

Yom Kippur: A Hunger Text Study Guide
Feeding the Hungry
www.rac.org/holidayguides

The Days of Awe are an important time for Jews to engage in self-reflection and perform the holy work of seeking forgiveness and teshuvah or repentance. As we deny ourselves food and water during the Day of Atonement to bring ourselves closer to God, we also bring food to feed the hungry. We hope that our acts of tzedakah will at once help us achieve teshuvah and provide for the millions of people around the world who suffer from hunger every day.

We encourage you to use the High Holy Day Hunger Fact Sheet (see www.rac.org/holidayguides) as well as the following texts and discussion questions to engage in dialogue about hunger on Yom Kippur:

Text 1: Sustaining the Whole World

<p>Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who, in His goodness, provides sustenance for the entire world with grace, with kindness, and with mercy. He gives food to all flesh, for His kindness is everlasting. Through His great goodness to us continuously we do not lack [food], and may we never lack food. -Birkat Hamazon</p>	<p>הָעוֹלָם מְלֵךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יי אַתָּה בְּרוּךְ בָּחַן בְּטוֹבוֹ. כִּלּוּ הָעוֹלָם אֶת הַזֶּן לְכֹל לֶחֶם גּוֹתֵן הוּא. וּבִרְחָמִים בְּחֶסֶד הַגָּדוֹל בְּטוֹבוֹ: חֶסֶדוֹ לְעוֹלָם כִּי בִשְׂרָר לָנוּ יִרְחֹס וְאֵל לָנוּ חֹסֵר לֹא תִמְיֵד . וְעַד לְעוֹלָם מְזוֹן .</p>
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1. In the Grace After Meals, we bless God who has sustained everyone and has not allowed anyone to lack for food. Why do you think that we bless this God, when it is not true that the entire world is sustained? What does this prayer mean to you?
2. What does this prayer suggest about the God/human relationship? What role does God have and what role do people have in feeding the entire world?

Text 2: Our Role

<p>When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the corners of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am Adonai your God. -Leviticus 19:9-10</p>	<p>לֹא אֲרָצְכֶם קָצִיר אֶת בְּקֵצְרְכֶם וְלֹקֵט לְקַצֵּר שְׂדֵךְ פֶּאֶת תְּכֵלֵה לֹא וּבִרְמֵה: תִּלְקֹט לֹא קִצִּירֶךָ תִּלְקֹט לֹא פְרִמָּה וּפְרִט תְּעוֹלֵל 'ה נִיַּץ אֲתֶם תַּעֲזֹב וְלֹאֵר לְעַנִּי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם</p>
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1. What do you think the Leviticus text tells us what our role is in feeding the hungry? What can we do passively and what can we do actively?
2. How does the law of the *pe'ah* (leaving the corner's of the field unharvested) relate to your life? In what ways can you leave the corners of your "field" to feed the poor?

Text 3 & 4: Feeding the Hungry and Redemption

<p>Always be happy when you are sitting at your table and those who are hungry are enjoying your hospitality, in order to lengthen your days in this world and the World to Come. -Babylonian Talmud, Derech Eretz 7:25</p>	<p>בשעה, שולחנך על שמח והוי שולחנך על הניחון באין שהרעבין ובעולם הזה בעולם ימים שתאריך כדי הבא</p>
<p>Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the LORD shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD will answer; thou shalt cry, and He will say: 'Here I am.' -Isaiah 58:7-9</p>	<p>וְעַנְיִים, לְחֶמֶד לְרַעֵב פֶּרֶס הָלוֹא עֲרֵם תִּרְאֶה-כִּי: בֵּית תְּבִיא מְרוֹדִים יִבְקַע אֲז. תִּתְעַלֵּם לֹא וּמִבְשָׁרָה, וְכִסִּיתוּ תִצְמַח מִהֶרָה וְאֲרַכְתָּהּ, אֹרֶךְ פִּשְׁחָהּ יֵאֱסָפָה יְהוָה כְּבוֹד, צְדָקָה לְפָנֶיהָ וְהִלָּף וַיֹּאמֶר תְּשׁוּעָה, נִעֲנֶה וַיְהוֶה תִּקְרָא אֲז הַגִּבִּי</p>

1. What attitude is Isaiah commanding us to have about feeding the poor? What benefit does the charitable person receive?
2. How does this change your view of *tzedakah*? Do you feel as though you are the recipient of blessing when you do acts of charity?
3. How does Isaiah build on this concept? What does the partnership between God and humanity entail? What kind of redemption does feeding the poor bring? What does redemption mean to you?

Text 5: A Modern Confession

God of Compassion, You commanded us through Your Torah saying, “You will eat, you will be satisfied, and you will bless the LORD your God.” But in Your world of bounty there are those who are trapped in the darkness of hunger. We are not so arrogant and stiff-necked to say before You that we have fulfilled the mitzvah of feeding the hungry and helping You to deliver them from the darkness to the light. Because we have sinned, scoffed, and oppressed. For the sin of closing our eyes to those who are malnourished. -Rabbi Noah Farkas

1. What discrepancy does Rabbi Farkas see in the Birkat Hamazon, which portrays a God who feeds all, and reality? In what ways are we responsible for this reality?
2. What does this confession mean for you on both a personal and a societal level? How can we do better in the coming year?