

Afar of Ethiopia



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Who Are the Afar?

The Afar (Danakil) claim to be descendants of Ham (Noah's son). They are located in the East African countries of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. They prefer to be known as the Afar, since the Arabic word "danakil" is an offensive term to them. They are a proud people, emphasizing a man's strength and bravery. Prestige comes from killing one's enemies.

The Afar consist of two subgroups: the Asaemara ("red ones"), who are the more prestigious and powerful nobles living primarily in the area of Assayita; and the Adaemara ("white ones"), who are the commoners living in the desert areas.

What Are Their Lives Like?

Most of the Afar are nomads who herd sheep, goats, cattle, and camels. A man's wealth is measured by the size of his herds.

Not all of the Afar are herdsmen. Some of them live in apartment buildings in the country's capital city, Addis Ababa. They remain there year-round and work in government jobs such as the Afar broadcasts of the Ethiopian radio station. Afar marriages are usually monogamous. Girls may marry as early as age ten. Meat and milk are the major components of the Afar diet.

Population: 2,008,000

Language: Afar

Religion: Islam

% Christian: 0.09%

% Evangelical: 0.08%

Bible Available: Bible Complete (2013)

Ministry Resources: Jesus Film, Magdalena, Audio Bible

What Are Their Beliefs?

Early in their history, the Afar were heavily influenced by the Islamic religion; and today, Islam is still held in great esteem. The people do not eat pork and rarely drink alcohol. Those who can afford to do so, make a pilgrimage to Mecca. In addition, many pre-Islamic beliefs and customs are also prevalent among the Afar. They believe that certain trees and groves have sacred powers. They also have various religious rites such as anointing their bodies with ghee (a type of butter). Spirits of the dead are believed to be very powerful, and a "feast of the dead", called Rabena, is celebrated each year. They also give annual offerings to the sea to ensure safety for their villages. Many people wear protective leather amulets that contain herbs and verses from the Koran.

What Are Their Needs?

Only one large river, the Awash, flows through the Danakil Desert. However, it dwindles into a series of lakes before ever reaching the sea. Consequently, there is a great need for pure water sources for the Danakil and their herds. In recent years, they have suffered because of famines and drought.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth long-term Christian laborers into Ethiopia.
- Ask God to anoint the Gospel as it goes forth via radio to this tribe.
- Pray that additional evangelistic tools will be made available to the Afar.
- Ask God to provide pure water sources for the Afar and their herds living in the Danakil Desert.
- Ask the Lord to raise prayer teams who will begin breaking up the soil through worship and intercession.
- Ask the Lord to bring forth a strong Afar church for the glory of His name!

Information from the The Joshua Project at joshuaproject.net



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