

Al Chet for the World's Refugees

Contributed by [HIAS](#)

Source: HIAS

Over the course of our Yom Kippur prayers, we recite the Al Chet over and over again.

V'al kulam, Elo'ah s'lichot, s'lach lanu, m'chal lanu, kaper-lanu. "For the ways in which we have fallen short, oh God, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement," we say. We take collective responsibility for our communal shortcomings, even for the ways in which we may not have failed individually. We acknowledge both our conscious and unconscious failings.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha b'imutz ha'lev v'al chet shechatanu l'fanecha bi'v'li da'at. "For the sin of commission and for the sin of omission," we say. But it is not just in our relationship with God that we have missed the mark. We have also wronged our fellow human beings, those who sit next to us and those we have never met but whose cries for help we failed to answer. At this time, we take a moment to reflect on how we fell short in our struggle to confront and stem the tide of the worst refugee crisis in history. We acknowledge both the actions we could have taken but did not and those we never knew to take in the first place.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha – for the sin we commit when we fail to recognize the enormity and pervasiveness of the global refugee crisis.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha when we close our eyes to the horrifying images of children clinging to the sides of boats unfit for sea travel, images of terrified parents passing their babies through barbed wire fences.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha when we are unwilling to give tzedakah to our full capacity to ensure that refugees have safe housing, medical care, and food to eat.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha when we remain silent with our voices and our votes instead of calling on the United States to be a world leader in responding to this crisis.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha when we allow fear to give way to xenophobia.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha when we assume that someone else will help.

Al chet shechatanu lifanecha when we absolve ourselves of the burden of tempering the decree faced by the 65 million refugees and displaced people around the world.

May our *teshuvah*, our *tzedakah*, and our *tefilah* enable us to do more in the year to come for those so desperately in need of our protection.

V'al kulam, Elo'ah s'lichot, s'lach lanu, m'chal lanu, kaper-lanu. For all these failings and more, forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement.

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