



AMERICAN
JEWISH
WORLD
SERVICE

Pursuing Global Justice
Through Grassroots Change



ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה Reflect. Aspire. Pursue Justice.

We encourage you to incorporate this reading into your High Holiday celebration.

*Who shall live and who shall die:
Who shall perish by sword and who by beast,
Who by hunger and who by thirst,
Who by earthquake and who by plague;
Who shall become poor and who shall become rich...*

Over and over again in the High Holiday liturgy, we admit our vulnerability before the great forces of the universe — violence and war, hunger, natural disaster, disease and poverty. We acknowledge that our individual fates during the coming year are, to a large extent, subject to forces beyond our control.

But we follow each of these pronouncements of helplessness with a declaration of potency:

*U'tshuvah, u'tfilah u'tzedakah ma'avirin et ro'a ha'gezeirah.
Repentance, prayer and charity avert the severe decree.*

Traditionally, we read these as mitigating practices — perhaps if we repent, pray and give *tzedakah*, we will be spared. But this year, what if we read this trio of **tshuvah**, **tfilah** and **tzedakah** differently? Instead of seeing these as ways of avoiding personal punishment after the fact, what if we look at them as ways to make a better world going forward:

*A world in which more people live full lives and fewer die unnecessary deaths;
A world in which there is less bloodshed in war
and fewer deaths at the hands of beastly rulers;
A world in which hunger is less persistent and no one dies of thirst;
A world in which the aftermath of earthquakes is alleviated,
and natural disasters are anticipated and addressed;
A world in which no one is forced to live on less than \$1 a day,
and in which we close the distance between the rich and the poor?*

This year, let us read **tshuvah**, **tfilah** and **tzedakah** also as reflect, aspire and pursue justice, our three vehicles for repairing the world and ourselves.