



PEOPLE GROUPS:

AFAR OF DJIBOUTI

The Afar people have been in the Horn of Africa for centuries, their lineages reaching back to the Arabian Peninsula. Language scholars tell us that they were some of the first people living in the Horn of Africa. Djibouti is home to about 300,000 Afar, who make up more than a third of the population. Afar peoples also live in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and are variously known by the names Danakil, Adali and Odali.

The Afar are organised into clans with a leader over each group. There are two main divisions within the Afar: the Asaimara who dominate politically and live on the coast, and the Adoimara working class, living in the desert and Mbla Mountains of Djibouti. Traditionally they have been herders of livestock, though many have turned to farming, migrant labour and trade to support themselves.

The Afar in Djibouti are overwhelmingly Muslim –

99.7 per cent – having been exposed to Islam in the 800s (yes, 1200 years ago!).

The rural Afar live in hot, arid regions in camps surrounded by thorn barricades, which protect them from the attacks of wild animals or enemies. The area is known for volcanoes and extreme heat, with temperatures reaching 50°C. Lake Assal lies in the Danakil Desert below sea level, and is the lowest point on land in Africa. It is a salt lake, it is a source of income for some who harvest the salt and transport it by camel to sell.

The urban Afar are more likely to meet someone who can share the gospel. There are only a few known Afar believers, who are isolated from other Christians and can become discouraged. Scripture, including audio recordings, are available, as well as the Jesus Film. Labourers for this harvest are needed, as well as faithful prayer warriors to prepare the soil.

At a Glance

- The Afar claim to be descendants of Noah's son, Ham.
- Although Islam allows polygamy, Afar marriages are usually monogamous; marriages between first cousins are preferred.
- Many pre-Islamic beliefs are followed in addition to Islam.
- A Feast of the Dead, Rabena, is celebrated annually; the spirits of the dead are believed to be powerful.

Pray

- Ask God to anoint the gospel as it goes forth via radio to this tribe.
- Pray for the small number of Afar believers and ask God to give them opportunities to share Christ with their own people.
- Ask God to raise prayer teams who will begin breaking up the soil through worship and intercession.

Sources: Joshua Project <https://bit.ly/3fmETEQ> | Atlas of Humanity: <https://bit.ly/3u2DA38>.



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