

Is This The Fast I Desire



A Prophetic Call to Bring the Refugee Home

Since the destruction of the Temple, our homes have become our sanctuaries, tables our altars, and bread our offering. In our homes we bless our children and are comforted in our mourning. In our people's scattered diaspora, home is sacred, and home is safe.

Until it isn't.

Time after time, we have fled our homes and sought refuge in strange places. We know intimately the destabilizing trauma of leaving everything behind and starting over somewhere else. We know the challenges of making ourselves at home in new lands, and we know the immeasurable value of welcome and support from those around us.

On This Yom Kippur morning, we sit in synagogue, fasting and praying. We hear the prophet Isaiah speak to us in the voice of God: "Is this the fast that I desire?" and the answer rings out clearly: NO. The fast that God desires is for us to let the oppressed go free, to share our food with those who hunger, and to bring the refugee home.

While we can never recreate or replace the homes from which today's refugees have fled, we can create the conditions under which refugees are able to create new homes and new connections, and to build sustainable and secure lives.

When we challenge dehumanizing rhetoric used by friends, family, or politicians;

When we push our governments to uphold their commitments under international law;

When we listen to refugees' stories, respect their agency, and empower them to make informed choices about their lives;

When we freely offer the resources of our communities to create a soft landing for newcomers, and support them in bridging the gap between what was and what will be;

In all these actions, singly and together, we bring refugees home.