

Who Shall Rest in One Place Who Shall Be Forced to Move



A Reflection on Unetaneh Tokef

מי יתָּה וּמי יָמוּת
מי יָנוּחַ וּמי יִנּוּעַ

Who will live, and who will die
Who will rest in one place, and who will be *forced to move*

On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed:

Who will dwell in safety, and
who will wade through dangerous waters with a child in their arms seeking asylum
who will grab whatever they can carry and flee from violence and conflict
who will try to make a life in the seemingly endless impermanence of a refugee camp
who will tentatively set down roots in a new place, hoping that this, at last, will be
somewhere safe to call home.

At this moment in history when over 120 million people have been forcibly displaced
from their homes, the ancient words of the High Holiday liturgy ask us to wrestle with the
painful realities of our contemporary world.

But we are not left to sit endlessly with our existential insecurity. Instead, we are given
the tools to temper its harshness: *teshuvah* – repentance, *tefilah* – prayer, and *tzedakah*
– justice.

Living our values of welcoming the stranger and seeing the Divine inherent in every
human being; raising our voices in protest of unjust and cruel policies; giving our own
resources of time, energy, or funds in service of creating communities filled with
compassionate care and righteous action – when we do these things, we temper the
cruelties of fate, of human malice and indifference, both for ourselves, and for those
most in need.