

**Once upon a time, there were some passengers on a boat. As the boat pulled away from the dock to begin its voyage, one passenger opened his bag and took out a drill. The other passengers became alarmed as he put the drill bit against the floor under his seat and began to make a hole in the bottom of the boat. The other passengers, in fear and astonishment, pleaded with him, “Stop! What are you doing?” The man was surprised by their objections. He calmly said, “What business is it of yours? Why should you care? I’m only drilling under *my own* seat. I have no intention of drilling under *yours*.” The other passengers frantically told him, “The seat might only be yours, but the water will rise up to drown us all!”**

**[Leviticus Rabbah 4:6]**

**It’s obvious that, of course, no one could be unaware that a hole drilled under one seat would sink the whole boat. We understand that the story of the man with a drill is a metaphor for something that we don’t always see so readily. Today, we must realize that we are drilling holes in our own boat.**

**The story and its interpretation, as told in a sermon by Rabbi Jeff Goldwasser of Temple Sinai in Cranston, Rhode Island, teaches that we tend to believe that we have the right to do what we want as long**

**as it does not directly affect others. Often, though, we are unaware of, or ignore, how private actions can have public consequences. Our simplistic approach toward our rights, believing that we can behave as we wish without considering the consequences for others, can lead to terrible destruction. The story reminds us that nothing we do is really completely separated from others. We are all in the same boat and the holes could be a real problem.**

**Today, on this new year, I want us to think about the boat we are in with our earth, humanity and with our Jewish people - Klal Yisrael.**

**Our ancient tradition was clear about these obligations. The Talmud includes laws that require leather tanneries – which were smelly and dirty – to be placed on the outskirts of a town. Jewish law takes the concept even further by saying we have no right to remove ourselves or withhold our help when we are able to help people in need. We have no right to keep information from people whose well being depends upon it. We have obligations to all our fellow passengers, according to our Jewish traditions and teachings.**

**It is a lesson that we especially need to take to heart today. Consider the ways that we so easily “drill under our own seat” in today’s society.**

**Global warming is an obvious example. This Pandemic has made it even more clear of the damage we are doing unnecessarily to our earth. During a time when we have, as a country, been driving and flying less, polluting less, we can see the positive differences in our environment. And, overall, we see the damage we have already caused as we watch unprecedented floods, fires, and storms. The melting glaciers, the rising sea levels, the global food shortages, the spread of disease, and the increase in powerful storms and wildfires are the result of the choices that each of us makes individually.**

**We could talk all day about the small things we can each do to prevent climate change, and I encourage you to learn more about them and do them. For now, though, let us notice that we are all drilling small holes under our seats every time we are careless with our earth.**

**NOW is the time to reset. Reset our intentions. Rosh Hashanah, the head of this new year, 5781, is the time to promise to do better for**

**the earth. Now, let us turn to the boat of humanity. There, too, we are causing some terrible damage.**

**This year, we have witnessed humanitarian crises in Venezuela, Yemen and at the Southern border of the US where it is estimated that at least 42,000 asylum seekers have been sent to northern Mexico cities along the border awaiting their trials. And there is US civil unrest sparked by the homicide of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, which has led to months of protests and changes to address racism at all levels of society.<sup>1</sup>**

**I will be speaking about racial justice during tomorrow morning's service. For today, let us ask ourselves, what is our Jewish obligation to humanity? The answer lies clearly in the story of Creation. Every human being is not only created betzellem elohim, in the image of God, but all people, in our tradition, came from the same one person, so that NO ONE person could say, "my ancestors were greater than yours," for we all came from the very same one. To see the face of God in each and every other human being, be they the child in an immigration detention center at the border of our country or the African American man, killed with a knee on his**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/our-approach/disasters/>

**neck, each and every person in this world is truly a reflection of the Divine, and it will only be when we see that and live by it that we will be truly fulfilling our obligation to humanity.**

**Our children remind us of this every time that we drive or walk by a person who is homeless. They insist that we not walk by or drive by without giving them something - money, food, or a gift card for food. They reminds us of what we have taught them (and what they learned at the Margaux School and JPLEX at Temple Judea) that person is a person, just like us, and he or she may have bad luck or bad things happened to them, but if we can help them in any way, we must. It is our job, as Jews. And they are right.**

**We have done numerous collections with JCS for the Kosher Food Bank throughout this pandemic and now through the HHDs.**

**Thank you to all those who volunteered and brought food. We have also created a COVID fund to help people within our Temple Judea community who are in need of help. Even people who never thought they would be on the receiving end of this mitzvah, it is important to know that we as a community are here for one another in times of joy and abundance and in times of need.**

**Finally, we must ask in this new year, what is our obligation to the people of Israel? To our Jewish community?**

**In a time when very old Anti Semitic tropes are being repeated by people at the highest levels of our government in addition to Anti Semitic rhetoric coming from both the left and the right. We can not ignore these dangerous and important events and words. Just to highlight a few over the last year: the Chabad house at University of Delaware was burned to the ground three weeks ago by Anti Semites; When almost two-thirds of millennials and Gen-Z are unaware that 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust and more than one in 10 believe Jews caused the Holocaust, and an anti Semitic ad ran last week in El Nuevo Herald, when NFL's DeSean Jackson posted actual Anti-Semitic Hitler Quotes Twice, and Congress member Ilan Omar stated that "Israel has hypnotized the world" and accused fellow member of Congress who support Israel of pushing for "Allegiance to a foreign country." It was only last year when the NYT International edition published a cartoon imputing sinister power to the Israeli Prime Minister, portrayed as a dog leading a blind US president wearing a kippah. These tropes have been used against the Jewish people for centuries with dire**

**consequences, and they conjure up images of the darkest time in our people's history 80 years ago in Europe in 1939.**

**As Elie Wiesel eloquently taught us: "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." We can not afford to be indifferent. When our Jewish college students are being asked to check their Judaism or Zionism at the door in order to participate in campus groups and events, and when 1 in 3 European Jews say they have been harassed at least once in the past year and the same number say they do not wear anything identifying themselves as Jews for fear of their safety - WE MUST STAND AGAINST ANTI SEMITISM AND ANTI ZIONISM WHEREVER IT REARS ITS UGLY HEAD - from the neo- Nazi march in Charlottesville, to college campuses, and from Europe to our government from the left or the right, from extremist ideologies propagated in the name of Islam, and from conspiracy groups on the internet spreading lies via social media platforms. We must stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters, be they Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, living anywhere in the world. In today's polarized environment, it is easy to call out Anti Semitism from the "other side" but we must also call it out from whatever we consider "our side" as well.**

**In the stained glass windows of our Temple under the three archways as you walk in, you will find the words from our tradition: Kol Yisrael Aravim Zeh L'Zeh, All of Israel is responsible one for the other.**

**We are Jews. We are obligated to one another, to humanity and to the Earth. In this new year, we can not back down from any of those obligations. Consider the year ahead. What will YOU DO to make a difference in all 3 arenas?**

**We have this opportunity with a new year starting today to renew, to recreate, and rethink our lives. What will we do with it? Will we go back to our old habits which damaged the earth and humanity itself? Will we bury our heads and ignore when our people are assaulted or degraded? Or, will we take this opportunity to stand up? We must stand up, speak out and start working - our people, our world and all of humanity is at stake. The choice is yours. Choose to start this new year by fulfilling your obligation, by stepping forward and standing up.**

**Many of you already ARE doing this work, and thank you for inspiring us! And there are plenty of opportunities to get involved at Temple Judea, through the Social Action Network and our Civil Engagement Campaign, as well as our partnership with Jewish**

**Community Services and our Caring Touch, Chesed Committee and so much more. Even during these times that we can not safely gather, there is much we can do to help.**

**When our grandchildren ask us why we didn't do more to protect this earth - what will our answer be? When the next generation looks back on history and asks, "how did you let that happen?" - what will our answer be? It is not too late. But, we must start now.**

**We are all in the same boat together, and none of us can be drilling in the bottom if we are to survive and thrive. We must live up to our highest ideals and fulfill our obligations as Jews.**

***L'shanah tovah tikateivu.* May we all be inspired to stop drilling and start working toward a better world. We all deserve that, and our children and grandchildren are counting on us. May you be inscribed for a good year. Shanah Tovah!**