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**Temple Israel**  
**“Simplicities”**  
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Two weeks ago at a business breakfast a video was shown with a man and woman in work attire going up an escalator. Suddenly the escalator stops, and the woman exclaims, “I do not need this” to which the man says, “Somebody will come... Hello, anyone there. There are two people stuck on an escalator and we need help. Would someone please do something?” After no one arrives the woman states, “I do not believe this! I am going to cry” with the man responding, “there is nothing else to do.” Mind you, they are on an escalator. When watching the video or hearing the story we all know what the easy solution is -- walk up the escalator. Yet, both the man and the woman neglect this simple resolution to their unfortunate predicament. Similarly, many times we are too busy and overlook the simplicities sitting in front of us.

Found within the Torah portion Ki Tetze, which Benji and Eli will soon read, are more than ten percent of the 613 mitzvot. One of these commandments is this simple and logical statement: if an ox of your friend goes astray, *Lo hit'alamta*, do not ignore it, take it back to him.

Yet, while it seems like a logical answer, if put in this ancient predicament, many might not immediately return the animal. We might *hit'alamnu*, ignore the ox with rationalizations like another friend will come by soon for the ox, I will get the ox next time, or the ox will be there when we get back. Yet, this is not an ancient predicament. There are many oxen that exist in our modern lives, as well. When a car breaks down in front of us, when a homeless man begs for money at the corner of Kirby and Poplar, or when we look at our caller i.d. but do not pick up the phone because it is our mother, our sibling, or our friend calling to kevtch, we must ask ourselves whether we will help or whether we will neglect them?

Whether you are a parent or a student in this room this morning, we can all agree that life is hectic. If we looked at our cell phone calendars, figuratively not literally, our weeks are packed with so many things. We have work or school, which sometimes even filters into the home. We have various practices such as sports, drama, or music. We

have art exhibits, theater tickets, and sporting events to attend. In the middle all of this meshugas, this craziness, we have difficulties finding time for necessities like food, water and sleep. Yet, no matter how frantic things become, we cannot ignore our role in taking a simple moment to help those around us.

In Judaism, the words "*Tikkun Olam*" embody this idea. Meaning, "to repair our world," it has come to mean social justice opportunities. Yet, *Tikkun Olam* signifies more than social action, it challenges us to become more responsible in the on-going restoration of our world to a holy sanctuary. This not only includes the important Mitzvah projects we do, but also inspires us to be more active in helping those around us on a daily basis. This could include stopping the car to help roll a broken down car to a gas station, giving a few coins to those in need or answering the phone just to listen.

In the final scene of the escalator video, a maintenance man yells up to the two individuals, "hey, I will be up there to fix it in a second." The man and woman turn to each other overjoyed and relieved saying, "he'll be here in a minute." As the maintenance man begins his ride up the escalator below them it too stops amidst its ascent. Now all three stand neglecting the simple action to their freedom. In thinking about these three, let us always be reminded of the easy fix not only to getting off the escalator, but also *Lo hit'alamta*, not ignoring the simple solutions and the social responsibility that confront us.