

Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman

Reflection before the Dane County Board – with Madison area Urban Ministry
November 17, 2014

Two thousand years ago the great Rabbi Hillel taught:

“If I am not for myself who will be for me?

If I am only for myself, what am I?

And if not now, when?”

If I am not for myself who will be for me?

The county budget affects all of us. We all have a stake in how funds and resources are allocated. We turn to our elected officials to listen to our needs, to lift up our priorities, to make decisions that will support our hopes and desires.

But let us not forget the second line of Rabbi Hillel’s teaching:

If I am only for myself what am I?

If we think only of our own needs and pressure our officials to vote only for our own interests, then we do not walk the path of compassion and justice. If we do not speak out when our elected officials cut disability services, increase racial disparities, and balance the budget on the backs of the poor, then what kind of a society are we?

And lastly Rabbi Hillel reminds us:

If not now, when?

The time is now, tonight at this County board meeting. The time is now to consider the needs of every member of our society, to remember that every one of us counts, to speak up for the mentally ill, the poor, the disenfranchised. The time is now to protect our safety net so that vital programs will continue to provide for all of us.