

Hineini Original English Interpretation / Translation

Rabbi Max Chaiken

2023

Hineni: Here I am

Hineni, here I am, Holy One.

Moses spoke those words, Your Torah teaches us.

And for generations before him, and in every generation since, others have sought the Presence you shared with that prophet, at a smoky shrub, in the desert, once upon a time, in a land far away...

Here I am, Noah said, building an ark to shelter creation itself.

Here I am, Miriam said, at least figuratively, taking it upon herself to watch out for her little brother.

Here I am, Shifra and Puah said, defying the orders of a Pharaoh to help Hebrew women make birthing decisions with their medical professionals.

Here I am, Abraham said, ready to go forth, ready to give even my beloved child to follow Your voice, O Holy One.

So here I am, hineini, and here we are, hineinu.

We stand on the verge of a new year.

Each of us stands on the verge of something new; perhaps exciting, perhaps unknown.

And collectively we stand on the verge of something new.

My clergy partner; the person who serves this sacred assembly by my side just offered the traditional words in Hebrew, but tonight I offer simply those from my soul, my own Hineni.

We entered this Shabbat, this First of a New Year, from among the congregation. We entered from among because each of us ultimately IS but *one* of the Congregation of Israel, gathered around the world tonight, to celebrate our new year. And as a servant of this sacred community, tonight, dear God, I pray for forgiveness. I ask you forgive my mistakes, and my missteps. Help me make right the ways I have missed the mark this past year. You know the perils of leadership, Dear God, better than any. Help me lead this congregation in the year to come in a way that will help our values resonate through Your world. Help me develop my measures of spirit, and truth, honor and kindness, justice and patience, courage and hope, joy and love; those qualities you instill in each soul. Help me be wise enough to discern when values compete; let me be open to all those who may disagree with me. May I lead a congregation where the spirit of unity, and Oneness, that You emanate into the world can be felt, and seen, in the good that we do for one another.

May our prayers of return at this season help me to return to the best of my self, and help each of us return to one another; to Torah, to Service, and to Acts of Loving Kindness.

Amen.