

September 2019 Message from Rabbi Dubin

Dear Friends,

As I write this note to you, we have just entered the month of Elul, the month of spiritual preparation for Rosh HaShanah when we will gather to read, among other things, the account of Abraham and Isaac on the mountain. To be sure, it is a scary and potentially disastrous story, but embedded within it is the key to successful community.

“After these things,” the story begins, “God tested Abraham. God called out, ‘Abraham!’ And Abraham responded, *Hineini*, here I am.”

Later, when Isaac asks his father what is going on, he says, “Dad . . . ?” to which Abraham responds, “*Hineini*, Here I am, my son.”

And finally, at the climax of the story, when Abraham (thank goodness!) is relieved of his sacrificial obligation, “The angel of God called out to him from the heavens: ‘Abraham! Abraham!’” To which, he replied, “*Hineini*, Here I am.”

Hineini. A single simple word. “Here I am.” But it’s more than just a reply of “Present” during roll-call. *Hineini* means “Here I am, ready and willing to do whatever is needed. Here I am, fully, unequivocally present.”

Above all else, being in a state of *Hineini* means that we are willing and able to listen, to really hear the needs and desires of others.

As we move towards *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*, as each of us begins to prepare our individual *cheshbon hanefesh*, our personal moral accounting, the message of *hineini* demands of us that we re-member to ask ourselves on a regular basis: Am I prepared to listen to friends and family with my en-tire being? Am I prepared to be fully present every time I am in conversation? Am I willing and able to let my attentiveness declare my love and concern for others? Am I ready to offer “*Hineini*,” my undivided presence?

Fortunately, I already know the answer to these questions. To be sure, there are times when we don’t live up to our ideals. There are times when we are too tired or otherwise unable to express our love and support in ways we wish we could. All the same, if I have learned nothing else from my first four years as a member of this community, **JCNWJ does understand and appreciate the sacred power of *hineini***. I know this because you all have shown me – in your words and, even more importantly, your actions. We are a community that talks to each other, listens to each other, supports each other, and loves each other.

Still, though, we can be only as supportive as our information permits us to be. If you hear of someone who is in need of support, or if you yourself are in need of support, please be sure to reach out to Ruth Shutzbank (chair of our Sunshine Committee) at 908-329-6036 or at howie.ruth@hotmail.com to let her know. Of course, you should always feel free to contact me directly at RabbiDubin@jcnwj.org. We are a community that values the sacred importance of hineini. Please help us to fulfill that precious obligation.

L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu

May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year,

Rabbi Dubin

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