

הִנֵּה



Hineini

Here I Am

וַיַּחַזֵּקְכָּה
Shabbaton in the Mountains
August 6-9, 2015 at Wildacres Retreat



Sicha
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Welcome to the Sicha Shabbaton in the Mountains 2015! This year's theme is: **Hineini: Here I Am.** This a powerful term in the ancient Jewish vocabulary of response overflows the boundaries of translation; *here I am*, being only a gesture towards nuanced meanings shaped by many sacred stories, as well as by centuries of conversation with those stories. At this Sicha Shabbaton, we intend to illuminate the ancient manuscripts with our own *here-I-am-now* moments.

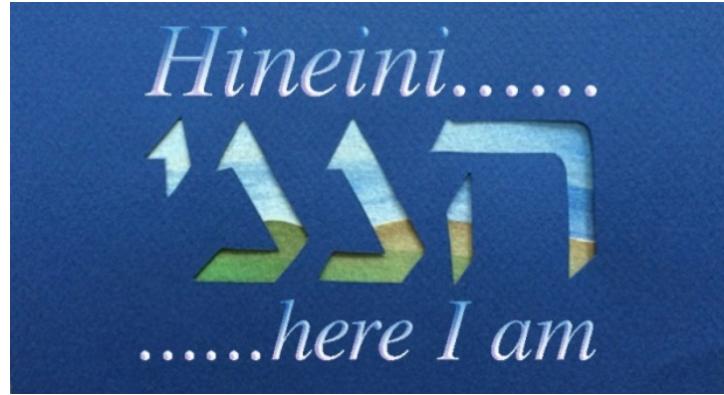
Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Samuel responded, ***hineini***, at critical moments, declaring their presence and readiness whether eagerly, or reluctantly, whether clear, or perplexed, about the need ahead. Isaiah heard God promise a time when God will say, ***hineini***, responding in kind to all of those who had said, ***hineini***, before.

- Abraham responded, ***hineini***, to a voice that had already asked and also promised much. How was he disposed towards the voice that would soon demand his favored son? Was his ***hineini*** dutiful, enthusiastic, or reluctant? The emotion that we hear in Abraham's voice is, of course, our own. Imagine your ***hineini*** to a commanding voice, to an inquiring child, and then to the urgent angel who would bring the trial to a halt.
- Joseph knew full well the danger of the mission that his father put before him. Yet, he responded, ***hineini***. Joseph's ***hineini*** led him to Egypt, to a life of slavery, service, and sovereignty. Did he think about, or second guess, the ***hineini*** that had propelled him? Did he link ***hineini*** to coercion, to love, to misplaced trust, or to a larger good? In retrospect, did father Jacob recall his son's ***hineini*** with remorse, with pride? Did Jacob have his son's ***hineini*** in mind when, deep in the night, perhaps in a dream, Jacob responded ***hineini*** to the mission of bringing his family from its home down to Egypt. ***Hineini***, here I am, he said: present to history, to transition and transmission.
- According to legend, Moses responded to the voice from a flaming bush because that voice sounded his father. ***Hineini*** might be the unqualified response of loving loyalty to a distant memory evoked close by. In the presence of love, trust, tradition, beauty, and fear, what made Moses (what makes us) say, ***hineini***?
- The young Samuel did not know to whom he spoke when he responded, ***hineini***. The boy's mentor, Eli, discerned that three times summoned was not a strand of dream, not a delusion. He taught Samuel, and the rest of us, a valuable lesson: If something consistently prompts you to say, ***hineini***, turn to it and say: ***I am listening***.

The future divine ***hineini*** will resonate with the ***hineini*** moments of these exemplars as well as with our own voicings of the ancient word of response, readiness, obligation, and loyalty. As we put ourselves into the stories, we discover that the stories are within us.

How shall we listen? How shall we respond? How shall we bring the ancient word into our own vocabulary? The conversation starts here...

Rabbi Steve Sager



Present To Learn And To Teach

At a university the student is faced with the edifice of a science that is complete in general outline and only needs development in detail; it lies outside the student, and he must enter it and make himself at home in it. This movement, however, would begin with its own bare beginnings, which would be simply a space to speak in and time in which to speak.

Nothing more? Yes, nothing more. Have “confidence” for once. Renounce all plans. Wait. People will appear who prove by the very fact of their coming to the discussion room of a school of Jewish adult education (will someone suggest a better word?) that the Jewish human being is alive in them. Otherwise, they would not come. To begin with, don’t offer them anything. Listen. And words will come to the listener, and they will join together and form desires. And desires are the messengers of confidence. Desires that join and men that join together: Jews—and an attempt is made to supply them with what they ask for. This too will be done modestly. For who knows whether desires such as these—real, spontaneous desires, not artificially nurtured by some scheme of education—can be satisfied? But those who know how to listen to real wishes may also know perhaps how to point out the desired way. This will be the hardest task of all. For the teacher able to satisfy such spontaneous desires cannot be a teacher according to a plan; he must be much more and much less, a master and at the same time a pupil. It will not be enough that he himself knows or that he himself can teach. He must be capable of something quite different—he himself must be able to “desire.” He who can desire must be the teacher here. The teachers will be discovered in the same discussion room and the same discussion period as the students. And in the same discussion hour the same person may be heard as both master and student. In fact, only when this happens will it become certain that a person is qualified to teach.

(Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought. Nahum N. Glatzer, ed. (pp.225-6).

Hineini: Three Times Present

(Genesis 22: 1- 19)

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי־כֵּן
וְהִלֵּלָה יְמִינָה
נִשְׁתַּחַת־אֶבְרָהָם
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיכָם
אֶבְרָהָם
וַיֹּאמֶר הָנָנִי.
וַיֹּאמֶר קַח־נָא
אֶת־בָּנְךָ
אֶת־יְחִידָךְ
אֶשְׁר־אֲהַبְתָּ
אֶת־יִצְחָק
וְלֹךְ־לְךְ אֶל־אֶרֶץ
מִפְרִיא
וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה
עַל אֶחָד הַהֲרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים
וַיִּשְׁכַּם אֶבְרָהָם בְּבֹקֶר
וַיִּחְבֹּשׁ אֶת־חַמְרוֹן
וַיִּקְחֶה אֶת־שְׂנִי נַעֲרֵיו אֶת־
וְאֶת־יִצְחָק בֶּן־
וַיִּבְקַע עַצְיָה עֹלָה
וַיִּקְםֶה וַיָּלֹךְ
אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים.
בַּיּוֹם הַשְׁלִישִׁי
וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶבְרָהָם אֶת־עִינָיו
וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמָּקוֹם מִרְחֹק.
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶבְרָהָם אֶל־נַעֲרֵיו
שִׁבְוׁ־לְכָם פֶּה עַמְּדָה
וְאַנְיִ וְהַנֶּעֶר גָּלַכָּה עַד־כֵּה
וְנִשְׁתַּחַווּ וְנִשְׁוֹבְּהָ אֲלֵיכֶם.
וַיִּקְחֶה אֶבְרָהָם אֶת־עַצְיָה הַעֲלָה
וַיִּשְׁכַּם עַל־יִצְחָק בֶּן־
וַיִּקְחֶה בְּיָדוֹ
אֶת־הָאָשָׁן וְאֶת־הַמְּאַכְּלָת

It was after these things
that God tested Abraham
and said to him
Abraham
and he said, Here I am—*hineini*.
And He said, take now
your son
your only one
whom you love
Isaac
and go to the land of Moriah
and offer him there as an offering
on one of the mountains as I will tell you.
And Abraham rose in the morning,
saddled his ass
and took his two servants with him
along with Isaac, his son;
he split the offering wood,
got ready and went
to the place
of which God had spoken to him.
On the third day
Abraham raised his eyes
and saw the place afar off.
And Abraham said to his servants
stay here with the ass
while I and the lad go up there
and we will worship and return to you.
Abraham took the offering wood
and put it on his son Isaac's back
and he took in his hand
the fire and the knife

וַיָּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיכֶם יְחִזּוּ.
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְצְחָק
 אֶל-אֶבְרָהָם אָבִי
 וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָנָנוּ בָנִי
 וַיֹּאמֶר הַנֶּה הַאָשׁ וְהַעֲצִים
 וְאֵיתָהּ הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה.
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶבְרָהָם
 אֱלֹהִים יְרֹא-לָזֶ
 הַשֶּׁה לְעֹלָה בָנִי
 וַיָּלְכוּ שְׁנֵיכֶם יְחִזּוּ.
 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
 אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים
 וַיַּבְנֵ שֶׁם אֶבְרָהָם
 אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
 וַיַּעֲרֵךְ אֶת-הַעֲצִים
 וַיַּעֲקֹד אֶת-יְצְחָק בָּנוֹ
 וַיִּשְׁם אֹתוֹ עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
 מִפְּעָל לְעַצִּים.
 וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶבְרָהָם אֶת-יְדֹוֹ
 וַיִּקְחֵ אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
 לְשַׁחַט אֶת-בָּנוֹ.
 וַיִּקְרֹא אֶלְיוֹ מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה
 מִן-הַשָּׁמָיִם
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶבְרָהָם אֶבְרָהָם
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָנָנוּ
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-תִּשְׁלַח יְדֶךָ
 אֶל-הַבָּעֵר וְאֶל-תִּעֲשֶׂה לוֹ מְאוּמָה
 כִּי עַתָּה יַדְעַתִּי
 כִּי יִרְאָא-אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה
 וְלֹא חִשְׁכַּת
 אֶת-בָּנֶךָ אֶת-יְחִידָךְ
 מִפְּנֵי.
 וַיִּשְׁאַל אֶבְרָהָם אֶת-עִינָיו

and the two of them walked on together.
 Isaac speaking
 to Abraham his father
 said, My father
 and he said, Here I am—*hineini*, my son;
 said Isaac, Here are the fire and the wood
 but where is the lamb for the offering?
 And Abraham said,
 God will see to it himself regarding
 the lamb for the offering, my son
 and the two of them walked on together.
 They came to the place
 of which God had spoken to him
 and Abraham built there
 an altar
 and he arranged the wood,
 bound Isaac his son
 and placed him on the altar
 on top of the wood.
 Abraham reached out his hand
 and took the knife
 to slaughter his son.
 And an angel of the Lord called to him
 from the heavens
 and said, Abraham, Abraham
 and he said, here I am—*hineini*
 And he said, Do not lift your hand
 against the boy or harm him in any way
 for now I know
 that you are a God fearer
 in that you have not withheld
 your son, your only one
 from me.
 Then Abraham raised his eyes

וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה-אִיל אַחֲר
 גָּאַחַז בְּשִׁבְךָ בְּקָרְנֵי
 וַיַּלְךְ אֶבְרָהָם
 וַיַּקְרַח אֶת הָאִיל
 וַיַּעֲלֵהוּ לְעֹזֶלֶת
 תְּחִתָּת בָּנוֹ.
 וַיַּקְרַא אֶבְרָהָם
 שֵׁם-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא
 יְהוָה יָרָא
 אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֶר הַיּוֹם
 בְּהָר יְהוָה יָרָא.
 וַיַּקְרַא מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה
 אֶל-אֶבְרָהָם שְׁנִית
 מִן-הַשְׁמִים.
 וַיֹּאמֶר בַּי נִשְׁבַּעֲתִי נָאָם-יְהוָה
 כִּי יִעְנוּ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית אֶת-מְצָבָר הַזֶּה
 וְלֹא חִשְׁכַּת
 אֶת-בָּנֶךָ
 אֶת-יְחִידָךְ.
 כִּי-בָרַךְ אֶבְרָהָם
 וּמְרֹבָה אֶרֶבֶה אֶת-זָרָעָךְ
 כְּכֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם
 וּבְחֹול אֲשֶׁר עַל-שְׂפַת הַיּוֹם
 וַיַּרְשֵׁזְעָךְ אֶת שַׁעַר אִיבָּיו.
 וְהַתְּבָרְכוּ בָּזָרָעָךְ כֹּל גּוֹיִה הָאָרֶץ
 עַקְבָּךְ אֲשֶׁר שְׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי.
 וַיַּשְׁבַּט אֶבְרָהָם אֶל-נְעָרָיו
 וַיַּקְרַמוּ וַיְלִיכוּ יְחִידָוּ
 אֶל-בְּאֵר שְׁבָעָה
 וַיַּשְׁבַּט אֶבְרָהָם בְּבְאֵר שְׁבָעָה.

and saw a ram behind
 caught in the thicket by its horns;
 then Abraham went
 and took the ram
 and offered it as an offering
 instead of his son.
 Abraham called
 the name of the place
 Adonai Yireh
 as it is said to this day,
 on the mountain of the Lord one is seen.
 And an angel of the Lord called
 to Abraham a second time
 from the heavens.
 He said, I swear by my Self says the Lord
 that because you did this thing
 and you did not withhold
 your son
 your only one.
 I will surely bless you
 and certainly multiply your seed
 as the stars in the heavens
 and as the sands on the sea shore
 and your seed will seize the gates of its enemies.
 And all peoples of the earth will be blessed by your seed
 since you listened to my voice.
 Then Abraham returned to his servants
 and they made ready and went together
 to Be'er Sheva
 and Abraham dwelled in Be'er Sheva.

Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

Hineini—I Am Ready

(Genesis 37:1-13)

וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב בָּאָרֶץ מִגּוֹרֵי אָבִיו	Jacob settled in the land of his father's sojourning
בָּאָרֶץ כָּנָעָן.	the land of Canaan.
אֶלָּה תַּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב	This, then, is the line of Jacob:
יְוָסֵף בֶּן שְׁבָע עֶשֶׂרֶת שָׁנָה	Joseph was seventeen years old
חִיה רָעָה אֶת-אֶחָיו בְּצָאן	shepherding the sheep with his brothers
וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת-בְּנֵי בְּלַחָה	serving the sons of Bilhah
וְאֶת-בְּנֵי זִלְפָה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו	and the sons of Zilpah his father's wives;
וַיִּבְאַרְיוֹן יוֹסֵף אֶת-דְּבָתָם רָעָה אֶל-	Joseph brought bad reports of them to their father.
וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֶחָב אֶת-יוֹסֵף מִכְלָ-בְּנֵיו	Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other children
כִּי-בָן-זָקְוָנִים הוּא לו	for he was a child of his old age
וַיַּעֲשֵׂה לוֹ בְּתִנְתָּה פְּסִים.	and he made him an ornamented tunic.
וַיַּרְאָו אֶחָיו כִּי-אָזְתָּו אֶחָב אָבִיהם	His brothers saw that their father loved him
מִכְלָ-אֶחָיו וַיִּשְׁנַאֲו אֶתְוָ	more than his brothers and they hated him
וְלֹא יָכֹל דָּבָרוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם.	so that they could not speak civilly to him.
וַיְחִלָּם יוֹסֵף פְּלֹום וַיֹּאמֶד לְאֶחָיו	Joseph had a dream which he told to his brothers
וַיַּוְסִּיף עֹז שְׁנָא אֶתְוָ.	and they hated him even more.
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְيָהֶם שְׁמַעוּ-נָא	He said to them: listen to
הַחֲלֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חָלַמְתִּי.	this dream that I have dreamed!
וְהִנֵּה אָנַחֲנוּ מְאַלְמִים אֶלְמִים	There we were, binding sheaves
בַּתּוֹךְ הַשְּׂדָה	in the field
וְהִנֵּה קָמָה אֲלָמָתִי וְגַם-נִצְבָּה	when suddenly, my sheaf stood up straight a
וְהִנֵּה תִּסְבִּינה אֲלָמָתִיכֶם	then your sheaves gathered around
וַתִּשְׂתַּחַווּן לְאֲלָמָתִי.	and bowed to my sheaf.
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶחָיו	His brothers said to him:
הַמְלָךְ תִּמְלָךְ עָלֵינוּ	Do you mean to reign over us?
אָס-מְשׁוֹל תִּמְשׁוֹל בָּנוּ	Do you mean to rule over us?

וַיַּסְרֵפּוּ עַזְדָּשָׁנָא אֲתֹוּ
 עַל-חֲלֹמָתְיוּ וְעַל-דִּבְרָיו.
 וַיְחַלֵּם עַזְדָּשָׁנָמָא אַחֲרָ
 וַיַּסְפֵּר אֲתֹוּ לְאָחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר
 הַנִּהְיָה חֲלֹמָתְיִי חֲלֹם עַזְדָּ
 וְהַנִּהְיָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיּוֹם
 וְאַחֲד עָשָׂר כּוֹכָבִים
 מִשְׁתְּחִוּם לִי.
 וַיַּסְפֵּר אֶל-אָבִיו וְאֶל-אָחָיו
 וַיִּגְעַר-בּוּ אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוּ
 מָה חֲמָלָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלֹם
 הַבּוֹא נָבֹא אַנְיִ
 וְאֶמְמָךְ וְאָחִיךְ
 לְהַשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְכָאָרֶץ.
 וַיַּקְנָאוּ-בּוּ אָחָיו
 וְאָבִיו שִׁמְרָא אֶת-הַדָּבָר.
 וַיַּלְכְּוּ אָחָיו לְרַעֲוֹת
 אֶת-צָאן אָבִיהם בְּשֶׁכֶם.
 וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְוָסֶף
 הַלֹּא אָחִיךְ רָעִים בְּשֶׁכֶם
 לְכָה וְאַשְׁלַחְתָּ אֶלְيָהֶם
 וַיֹּאמֶר לוּ הַנְּנִי.

And they hated him even more
 on account of his dreams and his words.
 Then, he dreamed another dream
 and told it to his brothers saying:
 Look! I have dreamed another dream.
 This time, the sun and moon
 and eleven stars
 bowed down to me.
 When he told his father and his brothers
 his father rebuked him saying to him:
 What is this dream that you have dreamed?
 Are we to come, I
 your mother and your brothers
 to bow to the ground before you?
 His brothers were jealous of him
 and his father kept the matter in mind.
 Now, his brothers went to pasture
 their father's sheep in Shechem.
 And Israel said to Joseph:
 Your brothers are pasturing in Shechem.
 Come, I will send you to them.
 And he replied: Here I am—*hineini*.

Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

Joseph's *Hineini*: Respect, Regard, Remorse

"וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל יוֹסֵף הַלֹּא אֲחִיךְ רָעִים בְּשֶׁבַע לְכָה וְאַשְׁלַחְךְ אֲלֵיכֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ "הֲנִינִי" (בראשית לו:יג). רַבִּי טַנְחוֹמָא בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי בֶּרֶכִיהָ: נָהָג בָּכְבּוֹד כְּמוֹרָא הָאָב עַל בֵּן - "וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲנִינִי".

אמר רבי חמא בר רבי חנינה: מדברים הללו היה יעקב אביו נזקר ומעיו מתתקינו - יודע היה שאתיך שונאים אותה, והיתה אומר לי "הנני".

And Israel said to Joseph: *Your brothers are pasturing in Shechem. Come, I will send you to them. And he replied: I am ready—hineini* (Genesis 37:13). Rabbi Tanhuma in the name of Rabbi Berechia: Joseph treated him with honor according to a child's obligation to fear his father, by replying: *Here I am/I am ready—hineini*.

Rabbi Hama bar Rabbi Hanina said: Jacob, our father, would remember these words and it would tear him up. He said: You know that your brothers hate you, but you said to me: *Here I am/I am ready—hineini*.

(Genesis Rabbah 84:13)



Jacob and His Son Joseph by Eustache Le Sueur

Here I Am: I Am In The Pit, The Pit Is In Me

הבור

לבשתי ופשתתי הבור חליפות.
או שמא לבש אותי הבור חליפות ופשת.
אני במעמקיו הקתרתי, עורת בתקריבי.
וهوא הקתר במעמקי.
עד איון-קתר.
עד אין-די.

The Pit

I put on and stripped off the pit in turns.
Or, perhaps it was the pit that robed me and stripped me off.
I was crowned in its depths, blind in my shrouds.
And it was crowned in my depths
Until crown made no difference.
Until it was never enough.

Rivka Miriam
Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager



Joseph in the Pit (Jacob Steinhardt)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Abram Kanof to NCMA

Hineini: Present to Past, Present to Future

(Genesis 45:28-46:4)

וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל
 רַב עֹז-יְוָסָף בְּנֵי חִי
 אֶלְכָה וְאֶרְאָנוּ
 בְּطַרְם אֶמוֹת.
 וַיִּסְעַד יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכֹל-אֶשְׁר-לוֹ
 וַיָּבֹא בָּאָרֶה שְׁבָעָה
 וַיַּזְבַּח זְבָחִים
 לְאֱלֹהֵי אָבִיו יִצְחָק.
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
 בְּמִרְאַת הַלִּילָה וַיֹּאמֶר
 יְעַקֹּב יְעַקֹּב
 וַיֹּאמֶר הָנָנִי.
 וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי הָאֵל
 אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ
 אַל-תִּירְאָ מִרְדָּה מִצְרִים
 כִּי-לְגֹזִי גָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר-מֵשֶׁם.
 אָנֹכִי אֶרְד עַמְךָ מִצְרִים
 וְאָנֹכִי אֶעֱלֶךָ גַּם עֶלְהָ
 יוֹסֵף יִשְׁית יְדוֹ עַל-עִינֶיךָ.

And Israel said: It is enough! My son Joseph still lives. I will go and see him before I die. So, Israel traveled with all that he had and came to Beer Sheba where he made offerings to the God of his father, Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a nighttime vision, saying: Jacob, Jacob! And he replied: Here I am--*hineini*! He said: I am the God who is the God of your father; don't be afraid to go down to Egypt for there I will make you a great nation. I will descend with you to Egypt and I will certainly bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.

Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

Hineini: Presence And Fear

(Exodus 3:1-6)

וְמֹשֶׁה חָנַךְ רָעָה אֶת-צָאן
 יְתָרוּ חֹתְנוּ כֹהוּ מִדְיָן
 וַיַּגַּד אֶת-הַצָּאן אֶמְרָרָה מִמְּדָבָר
 וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הַר הַאֱלֹהִים חֹרֶבֶת.
 וַיַּרְא מֶלֶךְ הָאֱלֹהִים אֱלֹיו
 בְּלֵבֶת-אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסְּנָה
 וַיַּרְא וְהַנָּה הַסְּנָה בָּאָר בְּאֵשׁ
 הַסְּנָה אִינָה אָכֶל.
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אָסְרָה-פָא וְאַרְאָה
 אֶת-הַמְּרָאָה הַגָּדֶל הָזֶה
 מִדְיוּעַ לֹא-יַבָּעַר הַסְּנָה.
 וַיַּרְא הָיָה כִּי סָר לְרֹאֹת
 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹיו אֱלֹהִים
 מִתּוֹךְ הַסְּנָה
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה
 וַיֹּאמֶר חָנָנִי.
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-תִּקְרַב הַלֵּם
 שֶׁל-גַּעֲלֵיךְ מַעַל רַגְלֵיךְ
 כִּי מִמְּקוֹם
 אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עֲלֵיו
 אָדָמָת-קָדְשׁוֹ.
 וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהִי אָבִיךְ
 אֱלֹהִי אָבָרָהָם אֱלֹהִי יַצְחָק
 וְאֱלֹהִי יַעֲקֹב
 וַיִּסְתַּר מֹשֶׁה פָנָיו
 כִּי יַרְאָה מְהֹבֵיט
 אֶל-הִאֱלֹהִים.

Moses was shepherding the sheep
 of Jethro his father in law, a priest of Midian
 and he drove the sheep into the wilderness
 and he came the mountain of God near Horeb.
 An angel of the Lord appeared to him
 in the heart of a flame in the middle of a bush;
 he saw that the bush was burning with fire
 but the bush was not consumed.
 And Moses said: I will turn aside and see
 this great sight
 why is the bush not burning?
 Now, the Lord saw that he had turned to look
 and God called to him
 from the middle of the bush
 saying: Moses! Moses!
 and he answered here I am—*hineini!*
 And He said: Don't come any closer
 Remove your shoes from your feet
 for the place
 on which you are standing
 is holy ground.
 And He said: I am the God of your father
 God of Abraham, God of Isaac,
 and the God of Jacob;
 and Moses hid his face
 because he was afraid
 to look at God.

Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

Here I Am: Ready and Fearful

הוּא שֶׁל גַּעֲלִיו
 וְאַת כָּל פָּנֵיו בָּאַחַת הַלִּיט, פָּנֵי יָלֵד, פָּנֵי גְּסִיךְ, פָּנֵי פְּלִיט
 וְהַאֲדָמָה שְׁפַתְחָת
 הַשִּׁילָה אֲפָר הַיָּאָרֶב מַעַלְיָה, כַּשְׁהִיא נִסְדְּקָת, לְשָׁמִים נִפְתָּחָת-
 וְהַאֲלָהִים קָרָא לוֹ מְשָׁה, מְשָׁה
 וְהַצּוּוִי חַד נֹרֶה מַתּוֹכוֹ, בְּחַזְקָה
 וּמְשָׁה מְחַשָּׁה
 אֲפָרָנִיו בְּפָנֵיו הַמִּכְסֹות נֹעֶז
 וְגַדִּי פְּעֻוֶּת, בָּנוֹ יְוָמָוֹ, הוּא אֶל חִיקָוֹ לְוָחָז.

He removed his shoes
 and all at once covered each of his faces, boy face, prince face, refugee face
 while the ground beneath him
 at the same time removed its dust, when it cracked, opened to the sky-
 and God called to him “Moses, Moses”
 the command a single shot from within him, like an arrow
 and Moses hiding
 his nails digging in to his covered faces
 a bleating calf, new born, clutching to his breast.

Rivka Miriam
 Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager



The Burning Bush
 (Shoshannah Brombacher, 2003)

Here I Am: In the Inner Room

ובחדר הפנימי אנו שומרים את בבד חפה של משה
 את עיניו הכהות של יצחק, את רגלו הנגררת של יעקב.
 ובחדר גשם מלוחמה עליינו, לחדר הפנימי נכנס
 להבט בכם בקרוב.
 כי כל אשר יוצא אל הקרב, רק באלה עצמו יעתף.

And in the inner room we keep Moses' heaviness of mouth
 Isaac's weak eyes, and Jacob's dragging leg.
 And when war stirs us, it is to the inner room we go
 to examine them closely.
 For each one who goes out to battle wraps himself in just these.

Rivka Miriam

Translated by Steven G. Sager



The Doorway (Steven G. Sager, 2011)

Refining Hearing and Here-ing

(I Samuel 3:1-11)

וְהַנּוּר שְׁמוֹאֵל מִשְׁרָת אֶת-ה' לִפְנֵי עֵלִי Now young Samuel served the Lord under Eli

וְדַבָּר-ה' הַיָּה יָקָר בַּיּוֹם הַהִנֵּם and the word of the Lord was rare in those days

אֵין חֹזֹן נִפְרָא. vision was not widespread.

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַהִוָּא וְעֵלִי שָׁכַב בָּمִקְוָמוֹ One day, Eli was asleep in his place

וְעַינָו הָחָלוּ כְּהֹזֶת לֹא יוּכֶל לְרֹאֹת. his eyes had begun to fail and he could barely see.

וְגַר הָאֱלֹהִים טָרֵם יָכֹבֶה The lamp of God had not yet gone out

וְשְׁמוֹאֵל שָׁכַב בְּהַיכְלֵל ה' and Samuel was sleeping in the Temple of the Lord

אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם אָרוֹן אֱלֹהִים. where the Ark of God was.

וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֶל-שְׁמוֹאֵל And the Lord called to Samuel

וַיֹּאמֶר חִנְנִי. and he said: Here I am—*hineini*.

וַיַּרְא אֶל עֵלִי Then he ran to Eli

וַיֹּאמֶר חִנְנִי and said: Here I am—*hin'ni*

כִּי-קָרָאת לִי you called me

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא-קָרָאתִי and Eli said: I did not call you

שׁוּב שָׁכַב וַיָּלֹךְ וַיָּשָׁכַב. go back to sleep. So he went back to sleep.

וַיִּסְף ה' קָרָא עוֹד שְׁמוֹאֵל And the Lord called Samuel once again

וַיִּקְם שְׁמוֹאֵל וַיָּלֹךְ אֶל עֵלִי and Samuel got up and went to Eli

וַיֹּאמֶר חִנְנִי and said: Here I am—*hin'ni*

כִּי-קָרָאת לִי you called me.

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא-קָרָא תִּי שׁוֹב שֶׁכֶב.
And Eli said: I did not call you; go back to sleep.

וְשֶׁמְוֹאֵל טָרֵם יִדְעַ אֶת-הָיָה
Now this was before Samuel knew the Lord

וְטָרֵם יָגַלְתָּ אֵלָיו דָּבָר-הָיָה.
before the word of the Lord has revealed to him.

וַיִּסְךְּ הִי קָרָא שֶׁמְוֹאֵל בִּשְׁלִישִׁית
The Lord called Samuel again, a third time

וַיַּקְםָ וַיַּלְךְ אֶל עַלִי
and he got up, went to Eli and said:

וַיֹּאמֶר הָנָנִי
Here I am—*hin'ni*

כִּי-קָרָאת לִי
you called me.

וַיַּבְנֵן עַלִי כִּי הִי קָרָא לִנְגָעֵר.
Now Eli understood that the Lord was calling the lad

וַיֹּאמֶר עַלִי לְשֶׁמְוֹאֵל לְזַה שֶׁכֶב
So Eli said to Samuel: Go back to sleep

וְהִיה אָס-יִקְרָא אֶלְךָ
and if he calls to you, say

וְאָמַרְתָּ דָּבָר הִי כִּי שְׁמַע עֲבָדֶךָ
speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

וַיַּלְךְ שֶׁמְוֹאֵל וַיִּשְׁכַּב בָּמָקוֹמוֹ.
So Samuel went to lay down in his place.

וַיִּבָּא הִי וַיִּתְּצַדֵּב
And the Lord came and stood there

וַיִּקְרָא כְּפָעַם-בְּפָעַם
calling to him as before

שֶׁמְוֹאֵל שֶׁמְוֹאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר שֶׁמְוֹאֵל
Samuel, Samuel! And Samuel said

דָּבָר כִּי שְׁמַע עֲבָדֶךָ.
speak, for your servant is listening.

וַיֹּאמֶר הִי אֶל-שֶׁמְוֹאֵל
Then the Lord said to Samuel

הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי עֲשָׂה דָּבָר בִּיְשְׁרָאֵל
Behold! I am about to do things in Israel

אֲשֶׁר כָּל-שְׁמָעוֹ תִּצְלִינָה שְׁתִי אָזְנוֹ.
that will make everyone's ears ring!

Hineini: The World Was Created For Me

תניא: אמרו עליו על הלל מצון בשעה שמי בשמחה בית השואבה אמר כן: אם אני כאן, הכל כאן. ואם אין אני כאן, מי כאן?

It is taught: They said concerning Hillel the Elder that when we rejoiced in the water drawing festival he would say the following: If I am here, everyone is here. If I am not here, then who is here? (Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 53a)

ביכד מאיימין את העדים על עדי נפשות? היו מכנים אונן ומאיימין עלייהו: שמא תאמרו מאמד. ומשמעה, עד מפי עד. ומפני אדם נאמן שמענו; או: שמא אי אתם יודען שספנו לבדוק אתכם בדרכיה ובחקירה. והוא יודען שלא כדיini ממונות דיני נפשות. דיני ממונות- אדם נוינו ממון ומתקפר לו. דיני נפשות- דמו ודם זרעוותיו תלוי בו עד סוף העולם. שכנו מצינו בקיון שהרג את אחיו. שנאמר: "דמי אחיך צווקים" (בראשית ד:ד). אינו אומר "דם אחיך" אלא "דמי אחיך"- דמו ודם זרעוותיו.

How did they admonish witnesses in capital cases? They would bring them in and warn them: Lest you speak from supposition, or from hearsay, or from the account of another witness, or say that we heard from a trustworthy person, or, lest you are not aware that at the end we will examine you by inquiry and examination--you must understand that property cases are not the same as capital cases. In property cases, one pays a fine and the matter is resolved. In capital cases, his blood and the blood of his descendants are in the balance until the end of time. For thus have we found with Cain who killed his brother; as it is said: *The bloods of your brother cry out* (Genesis 4:10). It does not say: *the blood* of your brother, but rather the *bloods* of your brother—his blood and the blood of his descendants.

דבר אחר: "דמי אחיך"- שעה דמו משליך על העדים ועל האבנים. לפיכך נברא אדם ייחידי, למלך שקל המאבד נפש אחת מישראל מעלה עליו הפטות באלו אבד עולם מלא. וכל המקדים נפש אחת מישראל מעלה עליו הפטות באלוי קים עולם מלא. ומפני שלום הבריות שלא יאמר אדם לחברו: אבא גדול מ아버지. ושלא יהו מינין אומרים: מרבה רשוות בשמי. ולהגד גודלו של הקדוש ברוך הוא. שאדם טובע פה מטבעות בחותם אחד, וככלו דומין זה לזה. ומלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא טובע כל אדם בחותמו של אדם הראשון, ואין אחד מהם דומה למבר. לפיכך כל אחד ואחד חי לומר: בשביili נברא העולם.

Another interpretation: *The bloods of your brother*—that his blood was splattered on the trees and the stones. Therefore was a single human created, to teach you that anyone who destroys a single life of Israel, Scripture accounts it to him as though he has destroyed an entire world. And anyone who preserves a soul of Israel, Scripture accounts it to him as though he has preserved an entire world. [And a single creation is] for the sake of peace among humans so that one cannot say to another: My ancestor is greater than yours. Neither can heretics say: There are many powers in Heaven. Further, this declares the greatness of the blessed Holy One; for a person may stamp out many coins with one die and they are all alike. But the Sovereign of all sovereigns, the blessed Holy One, stamped out each person with the seal of the first human. Yet not one of them is like any other. Therefore, each and every one is obliged to say: For my sake the world was created. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)



Cain and Abel (Marc Chagall, 1960)

Hineini: Creating the World To Come

אמר רב יהודה: מת שאין לו מנהמינו הולכין עשרה בני אדם ויושבין במקומו. ההוא דשכיב בשכבותיה דרב יהודה לא היו לו מנהמינו. כל יומא הוה דבר רב יהודה ביעשרה, ויתבי בדוכתיה. לאחר שבעת ימים, איתחזי ליה בחייב מיה דרב יהודה ואמר ליה: תנומ דעתך שהנחת את דעתך.

Rav Yehudah said: In the case of a dead person who has no comforters ten people should go and sit in his place. Once, someone who died in Rav Yehudah's neighborhood had no comforters. Every day Rav Yehudah would bring ten who would sit in his place. After seven days, the deceased appeared to Rav Yehudah in a dream and said to him: Let your mind rest for you have put my mind to rest.

(Babylonian Talmud 152a)



Minyan (sculpture by Nancy Schon)

מת שאין לו אבילים להתנחים- באים עשרה בני אדם קשרים ויושבין במקומו כל שבעת ימי האבלות, ושאר העם מתקבצין עליוון. ואם לא היו שם עשרה קבועין, בכל יום ויום מתקבצין עשרה משאר העם ויושבין במקומו.

In the case of a dead person who has no mourners to be comforted—ten upright people should sit in his place for all seven days, while the remainder of the people should gather around them. And if there is not a fixed group of ten, then each day a different ten from the community should gather and sit in his place.

(Maimonides Procedures of Mourning 13:4)

Let Someone Else Be Present

פָּנָו רַבָּנוּ: מִבְּטַלְיָו תַּלְמֹוד תֹּרָה לְהֹצָאָת הַמִּתְּה וְלַהֲכִנָּת בָּלָה. אָמְרוּ עַלְיוֹ
עַל רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּרֶבִי אַלְעָאִ שְׁחִיה מִבְּטַל תַּלְמֹוד תֹּרָה לְהֹצָאָת הַמִּתְּה
וְלַהֲכִנָּת בָּלָה. בִּמְהָדָר אַמְרִים אַמְוֹרִים- פְּשָׁאַיּוֹן עַמּוֹ כָּל צְרָפָו, אַבָּל יְשַׁעַמּוֹ כָּל
צְרָפָו- אִיּוֹ מִבְּטַלְיָו. וּבִמְהָדָר אַלְעָאִ שְׁפּוּרִי? אָמַר רַב שְׁמוּאֵל בֶּר אַנְיִי מִשְׁמִיחָה דָּרָב:
תְּנִרִיסֶר אַלְפִּי גָּבָרִי וְשִׁיחָא אַלְפִּי שְׁפּוּרִי. וְאָמַרְיִי לְהָ: תְּלִיסֶר אַלְפִּי גָּבָרִי
וּמִינִּיְהוּ שִׁיחָא אַלְפִּי שְׁפּוּרִי.

The sages taught: One sets aside Torah study in order to bring out the dead and to bring in the bride. They said concerning Rabbi Yehudah the Son of Rabbi Ilai that he would set aside Torah study in order to bring out the dead and to bring in the bride. Under the following conditions—when there is otherwise an insufficient number. But if there is a sufficient number—one does not set aside Torah study. And what is a sufficient number? Rav Shemuel bar Einee said in the name of Rav: Thirteen thousand people and six thousand with shofars. But some say thirteen thousand people among whom are six thousand with shofars.



Washing Vessel
(Prague Burial Society)

עוֹלָא אָמַר: כְּגֹון דְּחִינִּיצִי גָּבָרִי מַאֲבוֹלָא
וְעַד סִיכָּרָא. רַב שֶׁשֶּׁת וְאִיתִיכִמָּא רַבִּי
יּוֹחָנָן אָמַר: נְטִילָתָה בְּנִתִּינְתָּה, מַה
בְּנִתִּינְתָּה בְּשָׁשִׁים רַבּוֹא, אַף נְטִילָתָה
בְּשָׁשִׁים רַבּוֹא. וְהַנִּי מַלְיִי לִמְאָוְדָקָרִי
וְתָנִי. אַבָּל לִמְאָוְדָמְתָנִי, לִית לִית
שִׁיעָוָרָא.

Ulah said: Sufficient [for escorting the dead] is the number to line the way from the town gate to the cemetery. Rav Sheshet, and some say Rabbi Yohanan, said: Taking should be like giving; just as giving [the Torah] took place among six hundred thousand, so should taking [to the grave] require six hundred thousand. This applies to those who have learned Torah and Mishnah. But if one has also taught these things, there is no limit. (Ketubot 17a)

The God To Whom I Am Present I Spread Out My God's Names Before Me

פְּרַשְׁתִּי לִפְנֵי אֶת שְׁמוֹת אֱלֹהִי
 עַל רִצְפָּת מִזְדֵּרִי מִקְרִירָה.
 שֵׁם שִׁקְרָא תַּיְוּ בּוֹ פְּשָׁרוֹתָו נִפְחָבִי.
 וְשֵׁם שִׁקְרָא תַּיְוּ בּוֹ בְּהִיוֹתִי נְעָרָה.
 שֵׁם שִׁקְרָא תַּיְוּ בּוֹ בְּשַׁלְאִישׁ נִמְסְרָתִי.
 וְשֵׁם שִׁלְפָל שׁוֹב אָנִי מִתְּרָה.
 שֵׁם שִׁקְרָא תַּיְוּ בּוֹ פְּשָׁחָוָרִי הַיּוֹ גָּגְלִי. וְשֵׁם בָּאֵין לִי תְּקָרָה.
 שֵׁם שִׁקְרָא תַּיְוּ בּוֹ לְמַעַן אִירָּאָנוּ. וְשֵׁם בּוֹ קְרָא תַּיְוּ לְמַעַן לֹא אִירָּא.
 שֵׁם שִׁקְרָא תַּיְוּ בּוֹ לְמַעַן יָזְבָּרַנִּי. וְשֵׁם בְּכִי שִׁיפְנָעַ מִזְכִּירָה.
 בְּחָמֵם הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁתְּטִיחָ אֲפִים
 עַל רִצְפָּת מִזְדֵּרִי מִקְרִירָה.

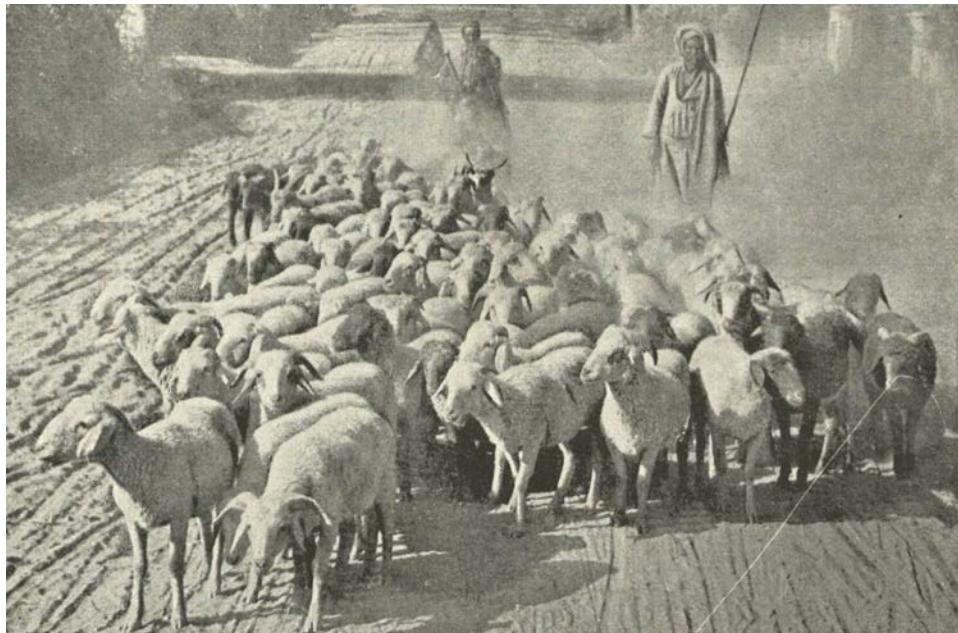
I spread out my God's names before me
 On the cold floor of my room.
 The name by which I called him when his spirit breathed in me.
 And the name by which I called him when I was a girl.
 The name by which I called him when I was given to a man.
 And the name by which I called him when again permitted to all.
 The name by which I called him when my parents were a roof to me. And the name when I had
 no ceiling.
 The name by which I called him that I might fear him. And the name that I called him so that I
 would not be afraid.
 The name by which I called him so that he would remember me. And the name so that he would
 not remember.
 In the heat of the day I will prostrate myself
 On the cold floor of my room.

Rivka Miriam
 Translated by Rabbi Steven Sager

Requiring Presence

"וַיֹּבְרֹךְ אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הַתֵּלֶךְ אֶתְתִּי לִפְנֵי... " (בראשית מ"ח:טו).

And he [Jacob] blessed Joseph, saying: The God before whom my fathers walked--[Abraham and Isaac-- the God who has been my shepherd... bless the lads] (Genesis 48:15[-16]).



רבי יוחנן וריש לκιש- רבי יוחנן אמר : לרוּעה שַׁהוּא עֹמֶד וּמְבִיט בְּצָאנוּ. ריש לκιש אמר : לְנַשִּׁיא שַׁהוּא מַהְלָךְ וּזְקִנִּים לִפְנֵיו. עַל דָעַתָּה דָרְבֵי יְוחָנָן, אֲנוֹ אַרְיכִים לְכִבּוֹדָו. וְעַל דָעַתָּה דָרְיִשׁ לְκִשׁ, הוּא אַרְיךָ לְכִבּוֹדָנוּ.

Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish disagreed- Rabbi Yohanan said: This is like a shepherd who stands and watches over his sheep [who walk before him]. Resh Lakish said: This is like a prince who walks with his elders before him. According to Rabbi Yohanan, we need his presence. According to Resh Lakish, he needs our presence.

(Genesis Rabbah 30:10)

Present To A Need

Imbedded in the mind is a certainty that the state of existence and the state of meaning stand in a relation to each other, that life is assessable in terms of meaning. The will to meaning and the certainty of the legitimacy of our striving to ascertain it are as intrinsically human as the will to live and the certainty of being alive.

In spite of failures and frustrations, we continue to be haunted by that irrepressible quest. We can never accept the idea that life is hollow and incompatible with meaning....

Animals are content when their needs are satisfied; man insists not only on being satisfied but also on being able to satisfy, on *being a need* not only on *having needs*. Personal needs come and go, but one anxiety remains: *Am I needed?* There is no man who has not been moved by that anxiety.

It is a most significant fact that man is not sufficient to himself, that life is not meaningful to him unless it is serving an end beyond itself, unless it is of value to someone else. The self may have the highest rate of exchange, yet men do not live by currency alone, but by the good attainable in expanding it. To hoard the self is to grow a colossal sense for the futility of living.

(Abraham Joshua Heschel, Man Is Not Alone, pp.193-4)

Present As A Need

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing life half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a
heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things
forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry,
and a person for work that is real.

Marge Piercy
(*To Be of Use*)

God Says: Hineini

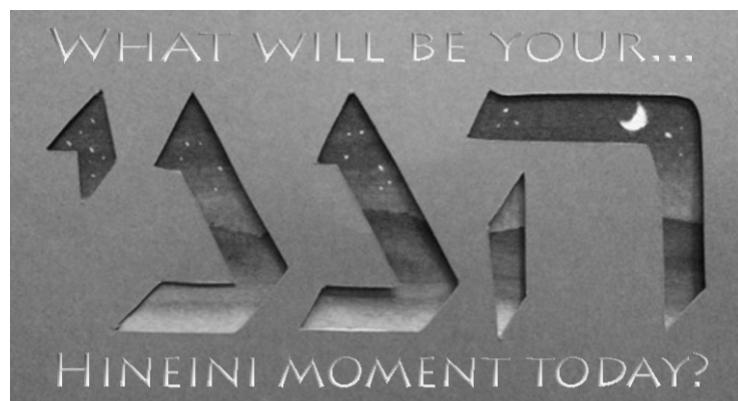
וירא מלאך ה' אלין בלבת-אש מתווך הסקנה וירא והפה הסקנה בער באש והסקנה אייננו אכל. ויאמר משה אשרה-נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה מודיע לא-יבער הסקנה. וירא ה' כי סר לראות ויקרא אליו אליהם מתווך הסקנה ויאמר משה משה ויאמר הני. (שמות ג:א-ד).

*An angel of the Lord appeared in a flame from the midst of the bush; and there! the bush burned with fire but was not consumed. And Moses said: I will turn aside and observe this great sight--why is the bush not burning up?! And the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look and called to him from the midst of the bush, saying: Moses, Moses! And he replied: Here I am—**hineini!** (Exodus 3:1-4)*

רבי יוחנן אמר: שלש פסיעות פסע משה. רבי שמעון בן לキיש אמר: לא פסע, אלא צנארו עקם. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: נצטערת לראות. מיך! שאתתך קראי שאגלה עלייך. מיד: "ויקרא אליו ה' מתווך הסקנה" (שמות ג:ד). אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא: אתה אמרת "הני". מיך שתבוא השעה ותתפְלֵל על ישראל ומיד אני עונח אותך בלבazon הזה: "או תקרא וה' יענה תשׁוע ויאמר הני" (ישעיה נח:ט).

Rabbi Yohanan said: Moses took three steps [out of his way to turn aside and see the bush]. Rabbi Shim'on ben Lakish said: He didn't walk anywhere, he just turned his neck. Said the Holy One, blessed be he: You troubled yourself to look. By your life! It's worthwhile revealing myself to you. Then, immediately: *The Lord called to him from out of the bush* (Exodus 3:4). Said the Holy One, blessed be he: You said, *Here I am—hineini*. By your life! The hour will come when you will pray on Israel's behalf and I will quickly respond to you in the same language: *Then, when you call, the Lord will answer; when you cry, he will say, Here I am—hineini* (Isaiah 58:9).

(Midrash Tanhuma Exodus 15)





Burning Bush and Hineini artwork by Galia Goodman, 2015