

Three Times Hineni

A Shabbat-table page for Parashat Vayeira: one word, said three times, to three different listeners.

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem · Monday 26 October 2026 · 15 Cheshvan 5787 · For Shabbat Vayeira, Saturday 31 October 2026 · 20 Cheshvan 5787

The Akeidah (Bereishit 22) is the hardest chapter in the parashah to read aloud at a table with children. One small word makes it easier to enter: הִנְנִי, "here I am." Avraham says it three times in the chapter. Each time someone different is calling him.

1. When G-d calls (22:1)

וְהָאֱלֹקִים נִסָּה אֶת אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי

"G-d tested Avraham. He said to him, 'Avraham,' and he answered, 'Here I am.'"

Rashi: כִּךָּ הִיא עֲנִיָּתָם שֶׁל חֲסִידִים, לְשׁוֹן עֲנָוָה הוּא וּלְשׁוֹן זְמִין. This is how the devout answer: a word of humility and a word of readiness (Rashi, citing Midrash Tanchuma).

Avraham does not yet know what will be asked. He says "here I am" before he hears the request.

2. When his son calls (22:7)

וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי בְנִי

"Yitzchak said, 'Father,' and he answered, 'Here I am, my son.'"

This time the word gets a second word attached: בְנִי, "my son." In the middle of the hardest walk of his life, Avraham stops to answer a child's question. Yitzchak asks where the lamb is.

Avraham answers that G-d will see to the lamb. Rashi on 22:8 reads the end of the verse, וַיֵּלְכוּ, as שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו, בְּלֵב שֶׁוָּה: they walked on together "with one heart."

3. When the angel calls (22:11)

וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִלְאָךְ ה' מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי

"An angel of ה' called to him from heaven: 'Avraham, Avraham!' He answered, 'Here I am.'"

Rashi: לְשׁוֹן חֶבֶה הוּא, שְׂכּוּפֵל אֶת שְׁמוֹ. Saying the name twice is an expression of love (Rashi, citing Bereishit Rabbah 56:7).

The same readiness that agreed to go up the mountain is now ready to stop. "Here I am" also means "I am listening for the next word."

Around the table

- Who is calling each time? G-d, a son, an angel. Does Avraham answer any of them differently?
- In 22:7 Avraham adds "my son." What does one extra word do?
- Rashi says the doubled name in 22:11 is love. When does someone say your name twice?
- Is it harder to say "here I am" before you know the question, or after?

- Who in your life needs you to say "here I am" this week?

For younger children

Play "Hineni." One person calls a name from across the room. The person called answers "Hineni!" and comes over. Then ask: how did it feel to be called? How did it feel to be answered?

One line to take into the week

Three times Avraham was called and three times he was present: for G-d, for his child, and for the voice that told him to stop.

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine.

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