

G-d tested Avraham and said to him, “Avraham,” and he replied, “Here I am.” (22:1)

Hashem called to Avraham *Avinu* and the Patriarch’s immediate response was, *Hineni*, “Here I am.” Hashem told him, “By your life, with that very expression (*hineni*), I will issue a reward to your descendants,” as it says, *Hineni, mamtir lechem min ha’Shomayim*, “Behold! I will rain down for you bread from Heaven” (*Shemos* 16:4). In another place, *Chazal* teach that the actual *manna* was in the merit of Moshe *Rabbeinu’s* response, *Hineni*, when Hashem called out to him from the *s’neh*, burning bush (*Shemos* 2:4). We see from here the incredible value of, and merit derived, from saying (and meaning), *Hineni*. While this word is translated as, “I am ready and willing to do whatever You ask,” there must be a deeper meaning to lend greater significance to *hineni*.

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 2:4) teach, *Bateil retzonecha mipnei retzono*, “Negate your will before His.” Simply, this means that when one finds his will clashing with the views and directives of the Torah, undo yours, let it dissipate, and instead submit to the will of Hashem. Is this what *hineni* means? Does, “Here I am,” mean submission? I think *hineni* goes one step further. When one responds, *hineni*, he intimates that he has no will at all. He is one with Hashem, and he has no selfhood. He wants whatever Hashem wants. He does not just agree – he wants it! The selflessness of Avraham and Moshe set the stage for the manner in which their descendants would serve Hashem. As far as our service to Hashem is concerned, the only will that we have is His will. We do not agree or acquiesce; we have no will of our own.

This does not mean that we go along and play our parts as submissive Jews. Absolutely not. We must manifest the same will, passion, and drive that we normally have for executing our personal endeavors in the way in which we serve Hashem. We should be excited and enthusiastic to carry out His will.

Reb Yitzchak (Irving) Bunim, zl, relates an anecdote that is pertinent to and underscores this idea. A man left his family in Poland, while he traveled to a distant country in search of means to support his wife and family. He was quite successful, and, over time, he amassed a small fortune - \$100,000. (This took place many years ago when such an amount of money was considered a small fortune.) Unfortunately, his success would be short-lived, as he became gravely ill, and the doctors despaired for his life. Understanding that the end was imminent, he sought a way to send the money back to his wife in Poland. No banks or wire transfers were available. He would have to be creative. He heard that a neighbor was traveling to Poland. The neighbor gave the impression of being honest. It was not as if the man had a plethora of choices. He would have to take his chances.

He told the man, “Please take my money back to Poland. Take for yourself what you want and give my wife what you want.” The man returned to Poland and, not wanting someone else’s money burning in his pocket, repeated to his wife the exact words he heard from her husband and

continued, "I have decided to keep for myself \$90,000 for my troubles and to give you \$10,000." The wife became enraged, "How dare you take so much of my husband's hard-earned money?" The man countered, "I am following your husband's instructions." The woman took him to a *din Torah*, halachic litigation, before the *Rav* of the community. He listened to both sides, then asked the man to repeat verbatim the instructions which her husband had given him. The man spoke slowly and carefully, "He said, 'Take for yourself what you want and give my wife what you want.'"

"If that is the case," the *Rav* said, "give her the \$90,000 and you keep the \$10,000." "Why?" the man cried out. "I did exactly what I was told to do."

"Not exactly," said the *Rav*. "You were charged with giving her the amount that you wanted. This means: Give her the amount of money that you want for yourself, which is \$90,000. That is what you want. Now, give what you want to her."

We must imbue the same fervor and enthusiasm in our *avodas ha'kodesh*, service to the Almighty, that we manifest when we are acting on our own behalf.