

Hineni

Susan L. Oren

הַנְּנִי הָעֲנִי מִמַּעַשׂ

Here I am, of little merit

Leading a vastly swelled community in prayer,
May I become more humble with this responsibility.

Carrying the positions of *shlichat tzibur*/prayer leader and Rabbi,
May I remember that such titles do not elevate, rather they affirm the
equality of us all.

Uttering the devotions of my ancestors and contemporaries,
May I grow in appreciation of our Jewish heritage and creativity.

Chanting melodies that move the spirit,
May I understand the messages that words alone cannot convey.

הַנְּנִי...נִרְעַשׁ וְנִפְחָד

Here I am...overcome by awe, and trembling

Standing before this community as prayer leader,
May no one mistake the sound of my voice as a substitute for theirs.

Reciting poetic yearnings, of penitence and renewal,
May no one hear accents of blind faith in my inflection.

Discussing the messages of this season and its obligations,
May no one imagine these commitments simplistic.

הַנְּנִי... מִפְּחָד יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִילוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Here I am... in awe of the One who abides amid Israel's praises.

Calling to the Holy One of Blessing, with praise and plea,
May each of us recognize that we create our reality as partners with God.

Repenting for the wrongs we have committed, whatever our intentions,
May each of us acknowledge our capacity for good and harm.

Approaching the Eternal... humbled, curious, and yes, skeptical,
May each of us grasp that wonder and doubt are also Jewish values.

הַנְּנִי הָעֲנִי מִמַּעַשׂ נִרְעַשׁ וְנִפְחָד מִפְּחָד יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִילוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Here I am, of little merit

overcome by awe, and trembling,
in awe of the One who abides amid Israel's praises.



Author's Note: I have based my translation of the opening phrases of *Hineni* on the English versions found in S. Greenberg and J.D. Levine, eds., *Mahzor Hadash* (Bridgeport, CT: Media Judaica, 1978), p. 609; and C. Stern, ed. *Gates of Repentance* (New York: CCAR, 1984), p. 19.

A teacher on various Jewish, feminist, and historical topics and writer of creative liturgy, Rabbi Susan Oren is the Associate Jewish Chaplain at Columbia University.