

Good Morning, Shanah Tovah, and Welcome! I am Gary Matzner, your Temple Judea President and my first word to you is, "HINEINI" which means, "HERE I AM".

As the Torah states, the first "HINEINI" was uttered by Abraham as a response to God's call at the beginning of the Akedah, the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of his son Isaac that we read during Rosh Hashanah. A fitting introduction to my personal Temple Judea journey. When originally asked to serve, my wife Veronica questioned, "Why? After all the years of public service for the Village of Pinecrest, why would you take on this responsibility?" My answer was simple, I was called to serve and "HINEINI...Here I Am". As I stand before you, I want you to know how honored I am to be here with you and I appreciate the privilege to address you on this Rosh Hashanah morning.

Regardless of where you are on life's journey, you are part of the fabric of this wonderful community we call Temple Judea: founding members, long standing members, and new members. You all nurture our way of life and help to build our solid and sacred infrastructure. After all, Temple Judea is more than a house of worship, it represents our second home. Whether you're here twice a year, attend Shabbat and Minyan services each week, attend lifecycle events, are parents of Margaux or J-PLEx students, reading the Tidings, following us on Facebook, live streaming or one of the 350 families that participated in last spring's Mitzvah Day, you have all said, "HINEINI, HERE I AM" for your community. For that, I thank you.

As President, I, along with our Executive Board and Board of Trustees, set an agenda of projects each year – this past year our goals were:

- To increase membership and automate software systems for ease of use
- To grow enrollment in the Margaux School
- To identify and develop new community leaders
- And to further strengthen our Continuity of Community Campaign

I am proud to report that all of these priorities have been tirelessly worked on through the partnership of our dedicated lay leaders and our conscientious staff. Together we have welcomed 65 new members as of today to the Temple Judea Community, and today have a thriving congregation of 650 member families. Thank you Hilary Gershman, our Membership Chair, and Sharon Israel Moskovitz, our Associate Executive Director, for bringing your passion to this ongoing effort. I want to also thank Sharon for overseeing our transition to ShulCloud and streamlining all of our automated systems. These technology upgrades made the membership process so much easier. So to all of our member families we are so thankful that "YOU ARE HERE."

Our Margaux Early Childhood School is now at capacity – there are 144 children enrolled – and now there's even a waiting list for next semester! I recently had the opportunity

to address the Margaux families at their annual Curriculum Night. These parents are energetic, passionate and an amazing group of young families who are very involved – they too have said, “HINEINI, HERE I AM”. Thank you to Kali Bensaadon and Alexis Brody our Early Childhood Committee Chairs; to Danielle Williamson and Carly Miller our Parent Association Co-Presidents, our Early Childhood Director, Mikki Feinberg, and our Director of Education, Beth Young.

Beth also spearheaded our new Leadership Development Program. Under the guidance of Rabbi Siegal, we focused on supporting future temple leaders through a six-session program. This year’s introductory group were identified and nominated by their temple peers. Special thanks to the Miriam and Gerald Barocas Leadership Endowment for making this program possible. It’s exciting to see our members embrace this opportunity for leadership and succession – they too have said, “HINEINI, HERE I AM.”

In addition, through the efforts of former Executive Director, Howard Goldman, and William Martin, Temple Judea was finally able to secure the elusive Homeland Security Grant. After five years of consecutive and unsuccessful applications, we were awarded \$100K earlier this month! These dollars will be used to further invest in upgraded safety enhancements and improvements to our campus. Protecting our campus is as important as protecting our future.

There is a saying, “Ein Kemach Ein Torah” – “Without sustenance there is no Torah”. The Continuity of Community Campaign, speaks to this truth. Our Rabbinic Endowment will ensure the temple’s viability for the next generation as well as protect our fundamental Jewish way of life. This purpose of this endowment is to ensure our outstanding rabbinic leadership for decades to come.

The Continuity of Community Campaign is being led by Debbie Siegel, our Vice President of Advancement and Danielle Spiegelman our Senior Director of Advancement in conjunction with a host of dedicated lay leaders as well as Rabbi Siegal and Rabbi Fisch. We want everyone to understand that gifts should be based upon what is comfortable and meaningful to each family. Everyone matters and every contribution counts. Our most important campaign goal is 100% community support. As we approach \$4 million dollars, 180 families have made a commitment to this campaign. This represents 33% of our campus and 70% of our overall goal. Think about that statistic – with only a third of our congregation participating to date – we have already reached 70% of our first campaign goal! How amazing is our community? However, there is still more work to be done to \$5.5 million. This effort is only two years in the making. If we are going to ensure the long-term sustainability of Temple Judea, and actually build a bridge to our future, this campaign cannot conclude at \$5.5 million. Rather, it should be our 1st milestone in the future of many philanthropic milestones together. And considering the response we have had to date, I know the lofty goals we have are not aspirational – but in fact, a reality. Thank you to all those who have said, or will say, “HINEINI, HERE I AM!”

What makes this such an amazing community for our member and school families are our clergy, volunteers and staff.

Let me begin by thanking:

- Rabbi Siegal, Rabbi Fisch, Cantorial Soloist Jodi Rozental, Jenny Snyder, as well as our High Holy Days Choir. We are truly blessed to have you.
- Thank you to our Board of Trustees and all those volunteers serving on committees – you dedicate so much time and talent - we are grateful.
- Our Klei Kodesh, our administrative staff, our teachers, and our maintenance team – we are so fortunate to have you and appreciate all you do.
- THANK YOU ALL FOR SAYING, “HINEINI” – you are most definitely HERE!

For all of you who have been part of Temple Judea, I thank you for your support over the years. For our new members, we welcome you, and if you are still considering joining, you have found a very special spiritual home.

As I close, I leave you with wisdom inspired by Rabbi Hillel and captured in a sermon by Rabbi Zoe Klein Miles. I thank Rabbi Siegal for sharing this with me. I am here! I am ready! Inspired by the “HINEINI”, I share with you, “For if not you, then who? And if not now, then when?”

May the New Year be a Happy and Healthy one for you and your families! Shanah Tovah!