

The Torah of Turnout

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Opening definition

1. **people making a conscious effort**
2. **to show up (in person)**
3. **to be able to do something together -to take some collective action**
4. **to make some form of change**

1. Commentary on the 2023 American Time Use Study by Derek Thompson

... Burrowing into the appendix tables of the American Time Use Survey [ATUS], she [the Atlantic's Ellen Cushing] unearthed the fact that just 4.1 percent of Americans said they “attended or hosted” a party or ceremony on a typical weekend or holiday in 2023. In other words, in any given weekend, just one in 25 US households had plans to attend a social event.

The ATUS is a government questionnaire that asks a large sample of Americans how much time they spend doing just about everything, including sleeping, working, grooming themselves, playing with their pets, and going to parties. The latest ATUS estimates were published last month. The results emphatically affirm... America's social calendar is bare.

Between 2003 and 2024, the amount of time that Americans spent attending or hosting a social event declined by 50 percent. Almost every age group cut their party time in half in the last two decades. For young people, the decline was even worse. Last year, Americans aged 15-to-24 spent 70 percent less time attending or hosting parties than they did in 2003

2. Priya Parker, The Art of Gathering (2018)

...Gathering - the conscious bringing together of people for a reason - shapes the way we think, feel and make sense of our world. Lawgivers have understood [this]....in democracies, the freedom to assemble is one of the foundational rights granted to every individual. In countries descending into authoritarianism, one of the first things to go is the right to assemble. Why? Because of what can happen when people come together, exchange information, inspire one another, test out new ways of being. And yet most of us spend very little time thinking about the actual ways in which we gather

3. Rabbi Sharon Brous, ‘Train Yourself to Always Show Up’, New York Times, 2024

....Showing up for one another doesn't require heroic gestures. It means training ourselves to approach, even when our instinct tells us to withdraw. It means picking up the phone and calling our friend or colleague who is suffering. It means going to the funeral and to the house of mourning. It also means going to the wedding and to the birthday dinner. Reach out in your strength, step forward in your vulnerability. Err on the side of presence.

4. Dr Erica Brown, ‘The Hineini Moment’, 2015

Hineni connotes a readiness and acceptance of a mission or task that often portends danger. It does not appear as often as one might suspect it would in the Hebrew Bible. It appears in three readings that frame the High Holiday liturgy, a time when being present is particularly consequential and important. Sometimes it's a call that God gives to a human being when no one else is present, as in Genesis 22:1 or Exodus 3:4. But it doesn't only have to be God calling. Sometimes it is the response of a human being to the call of an angel or messenger, as in Genesis 22:11 or 31:11. Sometimes it's said in response to a parent as in Genesis 27:1 or 27:18. Sometimes, as in the book of Esther, one human being - in this case Mordechai to Esther - calls out to another to grow in leadership and influence.

We tend to focus on the response to a call rather the request itself. But the Bible invites us to invite.

	Who is asking someone to show up? (Organising the turnout)	Who is showing up?	What's the motivation?	What aspects/characteristics in the call to show up help	What does showing up mean in this context?	Anything else you notice
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

Hineini Texts

Genesis 22:1 (this and all subsequent translations from The Contemporary Torah, JPS (2006)

Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am."

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

Genesis 22:7

Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

וַיֹּאמֶר יִצְחָק אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי בְנִי
וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנֵה הָאֵשׁ וְהָעֵצִים וַיְהִי הֵשֶׁה לְעֹלָה:

Genesis 22:11

Then an angel of the LORD called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am."

וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם |
אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

Genesis 27:1

When Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." He answered, "Here I am."

וַיְהִי כִּי־זָקֵן יִצְחָק וַתִּכְהֶינּוּ עֵינָיו מֵרָאִת וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־עֵשָׂו | בְּנֵי
הַגְּדָל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו בְּנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנְנִי:

Genesis 37:13

Israel said to Joseph, "Your brothers are pasturing at Shechem. Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "I am ready."

וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יוֹסֵף הֲלוֹא אַחֲיָיךְ רֹעִים בְּשֶׂכֶם לְכָה
וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הִנְנִי:

Genesis 46:2

God called to Israel in a vision by night: "Jacob! Jacob!" He answered, "Here."

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים | לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמֵרָאִת הַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב |
יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

Exodus 3:1-4

(1) Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

(2) An angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed.(3)

Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?"(4)

When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!"

He answered, "Here I am."

(א) וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת־צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵנוֹ כִּהְיָ מִדְּיָן וַיְנַהֵג אֶת־
הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֲרֵבָה: (ב) וַיֵּרָא
מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלַבַּת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסִּנֵּה
בְּעֵר בָּאֵשׁ וְהַסִּנֵּה אֵינּוּ אֹכֵל: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרֶה־נָּא
וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמֵּרְאָה הַגְּדֹל הַזֶּה מֵדַוְעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסִּנֵּה: (ד)
וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי סָר לִרְאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנֵּה
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי

Isaiah 58:9

Then, when you call, the LORD will answer; When you cry, He will say: Here I am. If you banish the yoke from your midst, The menacing hand, and evil speech,

אִז תִּקְרָא וַיְהוֶה יַעֲנֶה תִשְׁמַע וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי אִם־תִּסְרֶיךָ מִתּוֹכְךָ
מוֹטֵה שְׁלַח אֶצְבֶּע וַדְּבַר־אָוֶן:

Questions

1. Who is asking someone to show up? Who is showing up?
2. What is the motivation of saying 'hineini' in each case?
3. What aspects/characteristics in the *call* to show up help?
4. What does showing up mean in this context?
5. Anything else you notice...