

*Hineni.* Here I am.

This phrase, short and seemingly simple, has deep meaning in Jewish history and tradition.

When G-d appeared in the burning bush to tell Moses to lead the Israelites, Moses responded, "*Hineni.*"

When G-d charged Samuel to follow G-d's prophetic mission, Samuel replied, "*Hineni.*"

And on a much smaller scale, on Wednesday evening, when I was informed by the Board of Directors that they had selected me as the person to follow Dr. Powell as the next Head of School at de Toledo High School, I was ready: "*Hineni.*"

Unlike how other institutions might tell their candidate that he had been selected--a phone call, a meeting with the President of the Board, or some other nice, but formal method--our Board did it in a very "dT" way. At 10:00 P.M., I received a knock on my front door and found over 10 members of our Board who broke into song when I opened the door. As I stood in my doorway, I was enveloped by the leaders of our community singing "*Siman tov umazal tov, umazal tov vesiman tov, yehe lanu.*" (Good sign, and good luck and good luck and good sign will come to us.) Beyond feeling overwhelmed by the warmth and *hamishness* (soulfulness) of the moment, I knew that I was being called to action.

I am grateful and humbled by this opportunity to lead this *kehilat kedoshah*, this holy community. I look forward to protecting and enhancing this sacred culture that we have created. We are a school that on a daily basis creates the next generation of Jewish leaders as we fill the souls and the minds of our students in equal measure. I look forward to deepening and strengthening this mission.

Thank you for your trust and confidence. I will work passionately and tirelessly to continue on our journey to ensure de Toledo High School's place as what I believe to be the finest Jewish high school in our nation.

*Hineni*



Mark Shpall