

Hineini: Here I Am

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Only six weeks after the unimaginable events of October 7, I was privileged to join an incredible group of colleagues – the "Mishlachat Arevut" to Israel. We found ourselves immersed in a profound exploration of "Arevut Hadadit," and discovered that it's all about "showing up!" when being called upon, at the hardest of times.

In one of the most challenging times in Israel's history, this mission brought an array of senior Jewish leaders and educators together to foster collaboration, build connections, and contemplate strategies for the future. Such gatherings are happening now outside of Israel, yet this group chose to have their own personal "lech-lecha" and travel to the source and come together to collectively experience an intense journey on every level that sent a strong message to our organizations, constituents, and ultimately to ourselves.

Traveling to Israel in time of war is not an easy decision. Yet, each one on this group heard a calling and said "Hinenei: Here I am". As leaders and educators in the Jewish diaspora, our physical presence spoke louder than words, reaffirming our



commitment to shared responsibility, solidarity, and collective strength. Each day captured the full range of emotions that define life as we now know it: sadness and beauty, tragedy and upliftment, tension, and raw authenticity. Engaging in conversations about Jewish education and its intersection with Israel, we grappled with the profound impact of current crises on Jewish life far beyond Israel's borders.

We met with evacuated families from Beerli and listened to the unimaginable stories of the survivors. We were with them in their pain, listening and trying to process their new physical and emotional reality. We visited the “Kidnapped Square” in Tel Aviv where we had the opportunity to meet with families of hostages, for whom each day is an unimaginable nightmare.

These firsthand experiences enabled us in a real way to understand the true needs of these communities and imagined what our role could be in helping to meet those needs. They were the storytellers, now we must be the story bearers. In other words – we discovered our purpose. We discovered that most of life is showing up, and that is quickly becoming the Jewish value of our time. As professionals and as educators – we hold a great sense of responsibility to share what we have seen and heard, to bare these stories and share them with this broken world.

As the mission concluded, its impact continued to resonate in my personal journey as the CEO of Momentum. The profound 'on the ground' experiences, lessons learned, and the personal connections we made helped shape my understanding and extended beyond the program.

Next week, I will be traveling to Israel for the fourth time since October to participate in Momentum's Unity Mission, building on our shared Arevut experience, and fulfilling again the call of Hineni – I am here!