

## TBI PREZ Elul 2013

Hineini. “Here I am.” As someone who grew up listening to her three older brothers prepare for their b’nei mitzvah and being told that it was not traditional for girls to read from the Torah, it was a special honor for me to be asked to leyn for the second day of Rosh haShanah when Elohim calls out to Abraham, and Abraham answers, *Hineini*, “Here I am.” The words have special resonance for me because throughout most of my life, I inhabited a Jewish world where I did not count. My father did not include me in the shiva minyanim for our few relatives; once the rabbi at our traditional synagogue learned that our mother was not Jewish and had not converted, my brothers and I were no longer welcome. And as a not yet emerged lesbian who preferred not to be fixed up with the son/ nephew/ neighbor of congregants at various synagogues and houses of friends in a variety of college towns, it felt easier not to show up than to offend people by explaining why I was not interested.

Those of you who have never felt inadequate as a Jew may not be able to understand how powerful it is to be counted at TBI. I am deeply grateful and proud to be a member of TBI. Grateful for the opportunities TBI has given me to grow as a Jew, to be honored by carrying the Torah and getting to leyn (and it *is* an honor), and proud to belong to a Reconstructionist community that is teaching our children an ethics based on inclusivity. These are core values for me, as a Jew and as a person. I hope you will join me in recognizing membership in TBI as a value since we can only be as strong as the participation of our members. As you enter into the High Holidays and feel the call to connect in whatever ways feel meaningful to you, answer “Hineini.” May this be a time of meaningful reflection and growth; and may we all be written in the Book of Life for a year of health and the sweetness of true connections with family and friends.