It is in a dual capacity that we come to Synagogue this evening to face our Creator and implore His mercy. We come as individuals, each praying to G-d for his own welfare and the wellbeing of his loved ones and his immediate family. As individual men and women or as members of individual family groups we come to the House of G-d to ask of the Lord of the world to bestow His divine blessings upon us for this coming year. But it is also as members of a larger group that we assemble here this evening. It is as members of the Jewish people, as citizens of the holy community of Israel, that we congregate for these Kol Nidre services.

But how much easier is it to appear in that first capacity - as individual people or as individual families. It is so much simpler, both as far as understanding and emotion are concerned, to say: "O G-d, please help me advance my business this year", or: "Dear Lord, please heal my sick mother", than it is to say, "Good G-d, please send healing to all Thy people". Not that the Jew begrudges health to his fellows - Heaven Forbid! - but since the community is more impersonal than the family or himself, he finds it difficult to put much feeling into a request of that sort. Somehow, the idea "community" is only an abstraction, an ideal in which you are interested - but it is no more than just that - an ideal or abstraction. It is more difficult to sympathize with a hungry Yemenite in Israel than with your only son who is feverishly ill in bed with a grippe.

Conversely, it is infinitely easier to accept blame or guilt as only one member of an entire people, as only part of a great community, than as an individual. I may despise the anti-semite, but when one of these fanatics shouts, at a street corner, that all Jews are robbers, that does not bother me half as much as it would were he to single out me or my brother or family for such a stigma. It is easier to say, "We were guilty, we were treacherous, we were fraudulent", than it would be to say, for instance, "I was guilty, I was treacherous, I was fraudulent". In plain colloquial American, it is easier to pass the buck. It is easier to share the blame with others.
Yet may we enter this holy place on this Yom Kippur eve, with this surrender to the vested interests of the ego? Dare we recite, "Forgive Us" with less fervor and meaning and sincerity than if we were guilty? Dare we pray individually and confess our sins collectively? Dare we relegate our community-consciousness to such an inferior position?

The Mishna relates the dramatic series of events which occurred in the sanctuary when it was in its full glory and majesty. The Kohen Gadol, High Priest, was the main protagonist in this holy ritual drama, and on the day of Yom Kippur he was in the full splendor of his grandeur. "Happy is the eye that saw all this!"

On the night before the sacred Avodah, on Yom Kippur eve, the Kohen Gadol was not permitted to sleep. For he was the representative of his people and on a holy night of this sort he must not allow the heaviness of sleep to close his eyelids. And if it happened that, that the Kohen Gadol would begin to drowse, the young priests would snap their fingers and call to him," My Lord High Priest, stay awake on this holy night and remember your duties and obligations to the House of Israel." And to make sure that the Kohen Gadol would stay awake they would read to him from the Book of Job.

Now, what was there in the Book of Job which so fired the heart and conscience of the Kohen Gadol that it kept him wide awake and acutely aware of his responsibilities on this grave and solemn night? Why, of all Books, did they choose Job.

The story of the Book of Job is more or less known to all of us. It tells of this man Job who lost his wealth, became afflicted with the most devastating of oriental skin diseases, lost his family, and, bitter and dejected, eloquently complained against his bitter fate. Three Friends who had come from afar to console him tried to justify the punishment that G-d metered out to Job, and the debate that ensued is one of the world's greatest discourses on Reward and Punishment, Suffering and Fate. But still we may ask - how is all this appropriate for the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur eve?

You see, it is the beginning and end of the Book of Job that are so terribly important...
"There was a man in the Land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was wholehearted and upright, and one that feared G-d and shunned evil". He had a large family—seven sons and three daughters—and he was extremely wealthy. And he was well known, for he was the greatest of all the nobles of the Near-East. But his sons and daughters were unlike their father. Their lives consisted of feasts and banquets. Every day of the week called for another celebration. This round of parties certainly did not make for spiritual elation. So Job would bless them with heavy heart. And early every morning he would rise and offer burnt offerings, one for each child, and he would say, "it may be that my sons have sinned, and blasphemed G-d in their hearts".

"Thus did Job continually". It seemed that Job would spend a lifetime in this paternal and benevolent and kindly but narrow interest in his children. But nowhere is it written that Job had a friend. Nowhere is the community or people of Job mentioned. So much so, that we do not even know whether this man Job was a Jew or a Persian or an Assyrian or what not. He was a lone wolf with his sole interests in his own family.

It was then that G-d surrendered Job to Satan, and Job had heaped upon him the woes and worries, the trials and tribulations of which we spoke previously. But Job was perplexed and hurt. Why should G-d punish him so? Was he not an honest, G-d fearing man? Was he not a good family man? Did he not offer burnt offerings for his children? And if G-d would not accept his arguments, why would he not, at least, accept his prayers?... It was after long and bitter suffering, and as a result of profound thinking and introspection that Job found the key to his problems.

"And the Lord changed the fortunes of Job, when he prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before".

What a great and wonderful secret Job had discovered; it is not enough to bring burnt offerings for yourself or your family— you must also pray for your friends, your heart must be big enough to encompass all of the community and your actions must benefit all of society. Man is a social being and not a family member alone. It is not the clan, but the community that counts.
And it is of this that the young priests who kept the night watch in the Temple Courts, attempted to remind the Kohen Godol. "Lord High Priest, how can you sleep on a night like this, how can you surrender to the inviting comfort of sleep and divorce yourself from your people on Yom Kippur eve? Lord High Priest, the eyes of all of Israel are on you! Tomorrow you enter the Holy of Holies, and while you will ask for forgiveness for yourself and your family, yet your main task will be as ambassador of the entire community of Israel! Lord High Priest, remember Job - family interests are insufficient even if you are , even if you the High Priest of Israel! You may be troubled by your own sins, and the sins of your children who may have gone astray, but do not preoccupy yourself with your own personal affairs to the exclusion of all else. Is it not possible that these sins of you and your family are a result of your failure to sufficiently consider the great congregation of Israel? Is not the community an extension of the home and the home a miniature of the community? And, my Lord High Priest, even your prayers for yourself and your family until, as Job, you pray for your friends, for your people, for all people!"

My friends, as a Rabbi I dare not underestimate the greatness and goodness of my fellow Jews. As you congregate in this holy place on this Kol Nidre eve I recognize in you a spark from the Divine Soul of the High Priests of old. For in an age when so many Jews - so complete shirk their religious duties, when so many Jews are complete strangers to a synagogue, you who do come are as High Priests. I concede and affirm that you are , whole-hearted, righteous and God fearing men and women. And if perhaps I am younger than you, than allow me the privilege which the Kohen Godol of old allowed the young priests who stayed up with him on this night - the privilege of snapping my fingers and crying out - my dear older friends, wake up! Let us learn from Job! It is not sufficient even to come here as rugged individualists, it is not enough to come to pray for your families. Remember that you belong to a great and noble people, remember to pray in the plural, let the burden of the entire community weight upon your shoulders; be at one this holy night.
night, with the entire congregation of Israel.

You cannot sing an oratorio by yourself, I care not how splendid your voice may be. You must merge your voice in the chorus. You cannot render the Fifth Symphony by yourself, I care not how well you may play on some single instrument. You must blend your efforts with those of an entire orchestra.

As we proceed to the Maariv Services of this holy Kol Nidre night, let each of us join his prayers with those of all the congregation and those of all of Israel. Let us merge our voices with the chorus of all of Israel's worshippers and let our thoughts blend with the heart-felt supplications of all the House of Jacob.

And, as with Job, may the Lord change our fortunes to good, and may He give us twice as much good as we had before. Amen.