I was cleaning out my closets the other day, something I like to do around the new year. I was picking through all my old stuff, stuff I collected I don't even recall when, old things, new things, I have no idea what this is, type of things. They were all piled around me, tossed here and there. You should know that when I clean out a closet, I really clean out a closet, it all comes out in the open and I make piles and piles of stuff, categorizing and compartmentalizing all my stuff. This goes there, this goes here. Once it is all out and in piles, I start to sort and toss, I don't need this any more, Oh, I had forgotten about that, I should keep that thing it might come in handy again. And when I am done I take all the stuff I am going to keep and I put it neatly back in my closet, noting how much space I have now freed up for new things. And all the stuff I am done with, all the stuff that is used up and needs to be tossed, I don't actually toss, but I put in a box, labeled stuff to toss and put it in another closet, because you never really know when you might need one of those tossed things again.

Tonight, on Kol Nidre each of us is asked to clean out our closest, not the one we have piled up to the ceiling at home, but the one we have piled

up to the ceiling right here, the closet of our conscience. Over the past year we have stuffed it, cluttered it, packed it and compacted it with all types of promises, all types of stuff and tonight we clean it out. Tonight our tradition asks us to sort through the closet of our conscience and account for everything that we put there. The promises we made to ourselves, the goals we set, the resolutions we resolved. Tonight ten days into our new year we are given one last chance to examine the vows we made to ourself last year, one last chance to reconcile our conscience with the stuff that is in our closet before we fill it again with new promises for the new year.

Sorting through last years resolutions we must look to see if we did everything we said we would do, did we keep all of our promises, or did some go unfulfilled? Those that we accomplished, those promises that we kept to ourself and to others, those we can dust off refold and put back in our closet or maybe on our mantle to be recalled and revisited whenever we are feeling down or insufficient. Because a promise kept is a very special and significant accomplishment. It marks not only our keeping of our word for the sake of a goal, but it also shows that we respect ourselves

and our part in the world. Our tradition teaches that when we make a promises, when we make a vow, we make it not only with ourselves, but also with God. We have obligated ourselves to a certain behavior, a certain course of action and if we stick to it, if we keep our promise God looks with great favor upon us and those whose lives we touch by our resolution. We are blessed by God in this way not only because we have shown respect for God, but also, and I say more importantly, because in keeping our promise we have shown respect for ourselves. By keeping our vows we celebrate that unique human ability to bring about change because we willed it, that special ability in each of us to set a goal and work to achieve it. This is a sign of our faith in ourself as much as it is in God and their is no greater mitzvah than to believe in your own ability to bring about change.

And what about those promises in our closet that have gone unfulfilled, what about those goals we set and never got around to achieve, what about the stuff we said and then forgot about. For those we must seek forgiveness, for those we have this evening, this Kol Nidre prayer. We ask God to forgive us our promises unkept, our resolutions unresolved.

By doing this we must accept that God does not differentiate between those we meant and those we made in haste, those we made because it felt good just to promise. Our tradition teaches that God values each and every word we utter, and we should as well. And so we ask forgiveness for those words we spoke in haste, those promises we made but never kept. We ask to be forgiven, because we should have been true to our word, we should have considered what we were saying, we shouldn't have wasted God's time, our time with empty words, with empty promises. We cluttered our closet with a bunch of worthless junk over the past year; and tonight, we say the Kol Nidre prayer and we apologize for the junk we piled up over the year, the empty containers of promises, goals and resolutions that litter our life, that take away from the beauty of our accomplishments and achievements lining our closets or mantels.

And God forgives, God accepts our apology, and cleans up the mess we have left, but God does this conditionally. It is on the condition that we learn from our wasted clutter and not make the same mess in the new year we have already begun. That this year we should mean what we resolve,

that this year we don't promises just to make ourselves feel good or important, but we promise only what we mean to do. That this year we respect ourselves enough to take our own words seriously, to take our own words to heart.

At this time of year it is tempting, indeed it is exciting to see all the wide open possibilities a new year can hold. But I ask you, our tradition ask us all, what is more respecting of God, what is more respecting of us, empty unfulfilled promises that we will throw away and ask forgiveness from in a year's time, or a truly **new** year, a year filled with promises offered and kept, goals made and attained. A year that fills our closets with trophies and precious reminders. The new year is but ten days old and we have already begun to make resolutions and promises, let's learn from the clutter we have left behind, let's learn from the forgiveness we have been granted by God. This year, we must respect ourselves and the words we utter, this year we must strive to do what we say we will do. For what a year it would be is we meant all we said, what a year it would be if we did all we meant to do.