



New Beginnings -

**Masa - Journey - Reflection, Return and Renewal.**

In the secular world, there is one new year - January 1. It is a time for reflection on the past year, what could you have done better, differently, the same so that the coming year is just as fabulous (or better than the previous year?)

In the educational world, we have the start of school each year. Of course, it depends on the area of the country where you live when this occurs. In Chandler, it usually begins the third week of July. On the East Coast, where I grew up (can't you tell by my ever-moving hands when I speak?) the school year begins after Labor Day.

In Judaism, we use a different calendar; one that is a lunar calendar. This is why the Jewish holidays seem to migrate. On a Hebrew calendar, they are on the same day every month. On a secular calendar, the date changes. In Judaism, there are actually four new year's or new beginnings. One of them is not very well known at all. It is the first of the Hebrew month of Elul (which typically falls in August). "The tithe for cattle had to be made from cattle born in the same fiscal year, between 1 Elul one year and the next" according to [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com).

The other three, while not everyone knows that they mark a new beginning, are a tad more famous than the first. The second to last one is the first of Nisan which begins the redemption from Egypt and the birth of the Israelite nation and marks the Jewish holiday of Passover. The third one is the 15th of Shevat which is also known as Tu B'Shevat or the birthday of the trees. The first one is the first of the Hebrew month of Tishrei - Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah literally means "the head of the year." Jewish years are traditionally figured from creation (Rosh HaShanah is on the day that Adam and Eve were created) which begins this Sunday evening at sundown.

I find it very satisfying to have the opportunities for new beginnings. I am not big on making resolutions in the sense of, "This year, I will plan to...." But the ability to reevaluate a situation, to take a fresh look at a challenge, this makes me smile. I feel like I get a do-over; I can make it better this time.

This concept of reflection, return and renewal, Masa, definitely signifies my journey through life. I began my career in education as a teacher. Each school break was a



time to reflect on my classroom and children and renew my commitment to them when the break ended. Summer time was my opportunity to do the same for my family, reconnecting each June here in AZ or in July in New York.

With the beginning of this Jewish year, the birthday of the world, let's take a moment or two to reflect on our lives, our families, our children, and make a commitment to bettering ourselves and strengthening our relationships with those we love.

Shana Tova U'Metuka - May you have a good and sweet New Year!