

# New Year's Resolution Mystique

*by Sherry L. Read*

If you subscribe to many newsletters, magazines or newspapers, you've been inundated with articles on New Year's Resolutions over the past few weeks. Tired of reading various recommendations on how to make and keep my resolutions, I thought it might be informative to see if the history of this tradition lent credibility to the mystique of the New Year's Resolution.

New Years is a time for renewal, a time to start afresh. If you are in a northern climate with long nights and snow piling up, or in the southern hemisphere with long hot days, renewal and January 1 do not go hand in hand. However, in the time of the Babylonians, New Year's was a time of renewal - the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox, in late March as we know it today.

We can thank the Romans in approximately 153 B.C. for naming the month after the god Janus and moving New Year's to January 1. Janus, a mythical Roman king, had two faces - one facing to the past, and one facing to the future. Unfortunately, the Roman calendar was a bit chaotic, subject to addition or deletion of days by the priests in charge. Within a century, the season and dates were no longer coordinated. Caesar brought January 1 back in alignment in 47BC by declaring that year to be 445 days long. New Year's Day became a moving target during the Middle Ages when first, the Christians moved it to December 25, and then the Vernal Equinox (the first day of Spring) came back into favor.

In 1582, the Gregorian calendar was introduced. Pope Gregory XIII decreed that January 1 under the Gregorian calendar was New Year's Day, moving the calendar in synch with the rotation of the earth around the sun.

The Babylonians are credited with the tradition of New Year's resolutions. They had the tradition of committing to the return of borrowed farm tools, remembering that this is the start of the planting season. Romans added a tradition of exchanging presents and resolving to seek forgiveness from their enemies in the New Year.

Before you set about creating a resolution for yourself, consider the history. New Year's was to be a time for looking back and for looking forward. Originally linked to a time when the land was undergoing renewal, seeking a fresh beginning and luck for the next growing season was appropriate. With so many demands on our time and energies in today's world, how could we hope that resolutions linked to the solar calendar decided by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 would have any staying power?

Change will come about when you have clearly identified what you are seeking, the benefits from the change, the downside to not changing, and

established a plan with supporting structures for making the change. This year rather than look to the calendar to set a resolution, decide if change is truly what you seek. Only then, look to all of the wisdom on how to implement successfully the change you are seeking.

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