

Kathleen Meil
High Holidays 2016

It has always made sense to me that we celebrate the New Year in the fall. It's the season of back-to-school and new schedules, of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

It is fitting that our culture, which celebrates contradictions and embraces uncertainty, would usher in a new year at harvest time. We are reaping what we have sown, we are enjoying the fruits of our labor, and we are putting the garden – and the year – to bed as we prepare for a fresh start. There are no showy ball drops or public resolutions to get back to the Y; this period of reckoning is serious and personal. It's about who we are and how we relate to each other, and to G-d.

The high holidays have always felt deeply personal to me. I was born on Yom Kippur and I turn 40 this year on Rosh Hashanah. I've bounced for years between marking my birthday – my own personal new year's day – on the day of repentance and fasting, and marking it with apples and honey. I've wondered at the significance of each, and whether the particular alignment of calendars might set the tone for each year. But the truth is that the overlap is almost complete.

We must fast to appreciate the feast.

We must settle our debts before we take on new challenges.

We must celebrate through our sorrow and mourn on our happiest days.

We must plant next year's garlic even as we bring in this year's harvest.

I'm doing all of that during these days of awe, privately and in the company of this beautiful community. L'Shanah Tovah.