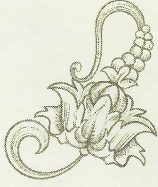



JANUARY



*Named for the Roman god Janus, protector of gates and doorways.
Janus is depicted with two faces, one looking into the past, the other into the future.*



NEW YEAR TRADITIONS

HOW DID THE TRADITION OF NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS START?

From the Babylonians who resolved to return borrowed farm equipment to medieval knights who would renew their vow to chivalry, New Year's resolutions are nothing new. See this brief history—and compare the top 10 resolutions from the 1940s to today! Are you surprised?

HISTORY OF NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

New Year's resolutions actually go back to ancient times! So, before you pooh-pooh the idea, let's explore the history behind this tradition.

In 2000 B.C., the Babylonians celebrated the New Year during a 12-day festival called Akitu (starting with the vernal equinox). This was the start of the farming season to plant crops, crown their king, and make promises to pay their debts. One common resolution was the returning of borrowed farm equipment (which makes sense for an agriculturally based society).

The Babylonian New Year was adopted by the ancient Romans, as was the tradition of resolutions. The timing, however, eventually shifted with the Julian calendar in 46 B.C., which declared January 1st as the start of the new year.

January was named for the two-faced Roman god, Janus, who looks forward for new beginnings as well as backward for reflection and resolution. The Romans would offer sacrifices to Janus and make

promises of good behavior for the year ahead.

Janus was also the guardian of gates and doors. He presided over the temple of peace, where the doors were opened only during wartime. It was a place of safety, where new beginnings and new resolutions could be forged.

If you think about the land and the seasons, the timing of early January makes sense for most of Europe and for North America, too. The active harvest season has passed. The holiday frenzy is ending.

As our founder, Robert B. Thomas, said, this is a time “of leisure to farmers ... settle accounts with your neighbors ... now having been industrious in the summer, you will have the felicity of retiring from the turbulence of the storm to the bosom of your family.”

A Boston newspaper from 1813 featured the first recorded use of the phrase “New Year resolution.” The article states:

“And yet, I believe there are multitudes of people, accustomed to receive injunctions of new year resolutions, who will sin all the month of December, with a serious determination of beginning the new year with new resolutions and new behaviour, and with the full belief that they shall thus expiate and wipe away all their former faults.”