

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I read a book by the Israeli American author, Maya Arad, titled *Happy New Years* or in Hebrew, *Shanim Tovot*, which is the plural of the traditional Rosh HaShanah greeting in which we wish one another a Shanah Tovah, A Good New Year, or more fully L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu, "May you be inscribed for a Good New Year."

Happy New Years consists of fifty letters written by a fictional Israeli woman living in the United States, Leah Moscovich Zuckerman, to friends from her teachers' college who are in Israel each year just before Rosh HaShanah for a half century from 1966 until 2016. These letters are an annual life review for her just as we do every year at this season.

Despite the title of the book, *Happy New Years*, many of the years are difficult ones for Leah as she struggles with the challenges that each of us face in one way or another. Yet she is always resilient and optimistic and never gives up hope that things will improve. And she works to make things better for herself and for her family even as she confronts harsh realities in life.

As we prepare for the New Year 5787 which begins on Friday night, September 11 (itself a poignant day, a Yom HaZikaron, a Day of Remembrance as Rosh HaShanah is also called) may we, like Leah, engage in life review as we ask ourselves the following questions: *What kind of life do we want to live in this next year? What kind of world do we want this to be and what sort of a year do we want this to be? Will we partner with the Almighty in the ongoing work of creation on this Yom Harat HaOlam, Birthday of the Universe and in tikkun olam, repairing the world to make it a better one?*

I wish you and your loved ones a Shanah Tovah u'Metukah, a Good, Sweet Year or in the words of Leah Moscovich Zuckerman (and Maya Arad!) *Shanim Tovot, Happy New Years!*

Shalom/Peace,

Rabbi Stephen Shulman
Director, Pastoral Services