

Happy Birthday World!

Thought for the Day

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Next week, as the new lunar month begins, both the Muslim and the Jewish communities will be celebrating. It will be Eid al Fitr, the end of Ramadhan, for one great faith, and Rosh HaShanah, the New Year, for the other.

For Jews this is a time of contemplation and self-examination, of fasting and prayer, of regret for past misdeeds and resolutions for future self-improvement. I am often taken by the coincidence that this is also the start of the academic year and the new political year, when so many are considering choices that will change their lives and the lives of others.

According to Jewish tradition, the new year marks the birthday of the world. Whether you interpret that literally or metaphorically, it is a nice thought, reinforcing the message that all of humanity, indeed all of creation, have a common origin, a shared pedigree, and a continuing interdependence.

We recall too the story of the Flood, when Noah's was the only family to survive, along with the biggest and most diverse menagerie ever seen. Whether or not the animals went in two by two, as the song says, or some went in sevens, as in the biblical original, perhaps it matters more not how they went in, but how they came out – a matter about which tradition is strangely silent! – because when they emerged, all surviving life had indeed been in the same boat – all had faced ecological catastrophe, and all had survived.

So this is a time to turn over a new leaf, not just in our personal dealings, but also in our use of this Earth and its finite resources. What better birthday present could we give our home planet than the security of a sustainable future?

So at this time I wish all our communities, all our listeners, and all the world, a year of blessings, good health and success; a year in which we are not condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past, but in which we learn to work together for a common future.

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