

Anniversaries

Thought for the Day

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I'm sometimes puzzled by the importance everyone gives to anniversaries – after all, a year is a fairly arbitrary length of time, if only because Earth years are not the only currency – ask yourself how old you would be in Martian years! And as the big 6–0 looms, I console myself that that's just six times round my hands, so I'd sound younger if humans had twelve fingers!

Many faiths have calendars that differ from what we use in daily life, so there's another wrinkle – I have two birthdays, one on my British birth certificate and one in the Jewish calendar, and they come together at most once in 19 years. Muslims would have to live for several centuries before their religious and civil birthdays coincide.

Still, we all do place a lot of importance on anniversaries, and the Jewish calendar at this time of year has more than its fair share. Last month it was the festival of Passover, regarded as the birthday of the Jewish people, when for the first time they came together as a single nation, and it's interesting that this first festival is also the most enduring, as even Jews with little other connection with their ancestral faith tend to observe the symbolic Passover meal. Then last week the Jewish world marked its own Holocaust Memorial Day, *Yom HaShoah*, when here in Glasgow we recalled not only the victims of Nazi atrocities, but the astonishing heroism of those who did what they could to save them. And today many communities will be celebrating what they see as a modern miracle, the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the land of the Bible.

But too much blood has been shed to make this anniversary a simple one – a time of celebration for some, it is a time of mourning for others, marked by another day of formal remembrance. So we must all hope and pray for an end to that cycle – that the day is close when Israel and its people will be able to live in peace with itself and with its neighbours.

Ephraim Borowski

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