

## Looking Forward, Looking Back

### *Thought for the Day*

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A few years ago, a friend of mine who lived next door to a synagogue needed to have her burglar alarm fixed, so of course the engineer had to set it off, reset it, set it off again – and again. After a while a face appeared at the window and asked if he could do it silently. “Why?” he asked.

- “Because it’s our New Year, and we have a service next door,” came the reply.
- “What?” exclaimed the engineer, “September’s a daft time for Hogmanay!”

I mention this now because tonight is the start of the Jewish new year. It’s not a time for partying but for sober reflection, a time for looking back and assessing how we’ve done, and for looking forward and resolving to do better.

That is a common theme of new years. January, after all, is named after Janus, the Roman god of entrances and exits, of beginnings and ends, and interestingly also of war and peace, whose two faces looked both forward and back. He was therefore also the god of movement and change, because change is always the end of one state and the beginning of another.

I think that’s an interesting metaphor for the ambiguity of last week’s political upheavals: no matter what the result, it was both an end and a new beginning, both change and continuity, both a turning point and a point of balance. It remains to be seen just how far along the continuum we come to rest, but that too will need serious consideration both of where we’ve been and of where we want to be.

So as Jewish people throughout the world carry out that same exercise of self-appraisal, asking ourselves what we could have done better and what we wish for the future, those of us here in Scotland can do so with a double concern, both for ourselves and for our country.

On behalf of the Jewish Community of Scotland, I wish you all a *shana tovah*, a happy, healthy, and peaceful new year.