

## Anniversaries

### *Thought for the Day*

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Anniversaries have been on my mind recently: what do they mean to us, and why do we feel the need to commemorate them?

(For the avoidance of doubt – and a lot of trouble when I get home – I’m not questioning why they matter just because it’s my wife’s birthday tomorrow – on the contrary, now the whole country can testify that I actually remembered!)

What started this train of thought was a civic reception I attended last week in Edinburgh City Chambers. This was in effect the two hundredth birthday party of the Edinburgh Jewish community, and indeed of the whole Scottish Community too. The Lord Provost and other speakers spoke about the key events and personalities of the last 200 years, and amongst the guests was a spry young chap who had just celebrated his own hundredth birthday the week before.

That’s quite an amazing thought – it means he can recall stories from his parents and their friends going back over more than half the history of our Community in Scotland. That’s first-hand testimony of a world we can scarcely imagine.

So there’s one reason anniversaries matter – whether personal or communal, they’re an opportunity to look back and take stock, and maybe learn from our mistakes, as well as giving thanks for all we’ve achieved and for how much our lives have improved. It’s like when we call a wake a celebration of someone’s life! But the past is past! And anniversaries also give us the chance to look forward and think about where we’re going next.

Not forgetting that birthday I mentioned, the next anniversary in my diary is on Sunday – the festival of Purim, which celebrates the deliverance of the Jews of ancient Persia from destruction. Yes, we look back and read the history in the Book of Esther, and that itself describes the customs that we still observe. Shared history and customs are part of what connects us, and a powerful reminder of what binds people into a community.

Happy Purim!