

## Thanks for the Memories

"AJ" remembers everything. Name a date from 1974 on and the forty-year-old woman will tell you what day of the week it was and what she did. She does this without effort or mnemonic mental cheat-sheets. Scientists call the condition hyperthymestic syndrome. I just pity her husband if he ever forgets their anniversary. Or her birthday. Or the day they met. Or the last time she wore that dress.

Personally, I need help to remember stuff. My computer pings me when a meeting or deadline draws near. My cell phone preserves the numbers of friends and family. I consult various plastic rectangles for the correct string of digits that allow me to buy stuff online, check out books on Tertullian, and prove to La Migra that I was born on the north side of the fence.

For most of us, repetition drives memory. Biblically this technique often comes paired with a party. God told Israel to keep telling the tale of Passover, but to do it around a roast lamb amidst a series of toasts. Purim recalls the salvation of Israel in the days of Esther; the rabbis forbade moderation in the celebration of that story.

As Shakespeare's King Harry fires up his forces to face the French at Agincourt, he holds out the prospect of the annual feast that veterans will throw on the battle's anniversary. "Old men forget," his majesty acknowledges,

yet all shall be forgot,  
But he'll remember with advantages  
What feats he did that day.

Memorial fetes help us remember our feats, and a selectively faulty memory allows us to improve with time.

Christmas is a time to remember, to tell again the story of a megalomaniac monarch and an IRS directive, of a long walk from Nazareth to a musty manger in Bethlehem. And because it is a time to remember, Christmas is also a time to revel, to gather our friends and befriend strangers and taste and see that the Lord is good. And it is a time to remember a particular date that lives in the mind of the Father alone, the day and the hour when history ends and all memory becomes present praise.

Memorably,  
Doug