

NOT A MINUTE PAST THE EXPIRATION DATE

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

"And it happened, at the end of two years of days, that Pharaoh dreamed... And Pharaoh sent and called for Yoseph, and they rushed [Yoseph] out of the pit..." [41:1,14]

The end of Yoseph's captivity came suddenly, after precisely two years "of days." One day he was a convicted criminal, the next he was a desperately needed advisor to Pharaoh. The Medrash says, "an end is set for darkness." When the end-time arrived, the change was immediate.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that whenever the time for something expires, whether for good or not, G-d does not wait a single minute beyond that set time. Because the time was up, they rushed Yoseph out of prison "with lightning speed."

I know personally of several couples who experienced this in their own lives. In traditional circles, people don't date "for fun," but because they are actively seeking a spouse. So the process isn't terribly enjoyable. In many case, both parties have "looked" for several years - and then, on the first date with their eventual spouse, realized that the search was over. It doesn't happen too often, but in any case, it never takes even a minute longer than the Plan requires! When the time is up, it's over.

The Chofetz Chaim applies this to the concept of Israel's final redemption: when the time comes, it will be immediate. He further explained the verse in Malachi 3:23, where G-d promises that He will send the prophet Eliyahu before the redemption. The actual language of the verse is not "I will send," but "I *send*." The prophet Eliyahu is constantly prepared, waiting to complete his mission; we are ourselves the only reason for the delay!

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The author is the Director of Project Genesis.