

“Take Your Time”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Recently I went on a short vacation with my family. Summoning all my resolution for five days, I did not check my email. When I returned I discovered something remarkable.

Of the several hundred messages awaiting me, many were junk, some were important, and a large number had taken care of themselves. Had I checked them right away, answers would have been required, but time took care of the issue. As Emerson wrote in his essay on Napoleon: "He directed Bourrienne to leave all letters unopened for three weeks, and then observed with satisfaction how large a part of the correspondence had thus disposed of itself, and no longer required an answer."

We are slaves to the instant. We respond immediately, giving nothing time to brew, to baste, to boil away. Learning about the world by reading a newspaper, insisted Ben Hecht, was like learning the time by only consulting a second hand. What then of those who learn from the Internet alone? We see each thread, but with our noses pressed close, the tapestry is inaccessible to us. Study, depth, reflection can offer more than the constant point and click that characterize our days.

The Psalmist writes of God: "A thousand years in Your sight are like a day" (Ps 90:4). God sees under the aspect of eternity. Too often in modern times we see things under the aspect of the instant. That which is urgent is not always important; a little distance, a deep breath and a bit of faith can help us distinguish between the two.