

And the Egyptians were burying (those among them whom Hashem had struck)... and on their gods Hashem had inflicted punishment. (33:4)

The Torah begins by informing us that the Jewish people left Egypt “with an upraised hand to the eyes of the Egyptians.” It then apprises us of the Egyptians burying their dead and continues to let us know that, not only did the firstborn perish, but Hashem also destroyed their idols. Can we derive a message from the juxtaposition of these two punishments? To explain the connection between the two punishments, we cite *Rabbeinu Bachya* who writes (commentary to *Shemos* 12:12) that, while Hashem, indeed, destroyed the Egyptian idols at night (the same time that He smote the firstborn), the Egyptians did not take notice. They were too preoccupied with the fact that the firstborn were dying. It was only the following morning, when they were on their way to bury their dead near their idols, that they noticed their idols in a state of destruction. Thus, the Torah does not mention the destruction of the idols at night, the same time in which *Makkas Bechoros* was wreaking havoc on the Egyptians. It was not enough for the Egyptians to receive their due punishment with *Makkas Bechoros*, it was equally important for them to realize and acknowledge how powerless their idols were. Not only could the idols not save their firstborn – they could not even save themselves.

I think that this teaches us a powerful lesson. We often rely on self-made saviors – in the guise of doctors, benefactors, various therapies – anything but *Hashem Yisborach*. When we see that, in the long run, it was Hashem alone who could – and did – help us deal with adversity, it is critical that we not only thank Hashem, but that we acknowledge the futility of depending upon other approaches upon which we have relied. Even their successes were the result of Hashem's benevolent manipulation of events. When *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt, it was vital that the Egyptian people, not only receive their due punishment for enslaving our people, but it was equally important for them to realize that their gods were man-made figments of their imagination – and had as much power as the fools who served them.