

And neither shall you set up a pillar which Hashem your G-d hates." (16:22)

Rashi notes that, although the pillar was beloved by Hashem during the days of the Patriarchs, He now hates it because the Canaanites had employed it for idolatry. This comment is puzzling. The pagans also worshipped on altars, but altars were not prohibited by Hashem. Why did He single out the pillars to be forbidden? Perhaps, we can suggest a homiletic interpretation of this law. Prior to the *Torah's* transmission to *Klal Yisrael*, a Jew's potential level for achievement was limited. Through the *Torah* and *mitzvos*, however, Hashem structured a new mandate to *Klal Yisrael*. They now had the obligation to strive constantly for deeper understanding of *Torah*, higher levels of spiritual achievement, and greater advancement in the area of *mitzvah* performance. It had become no longer simply sufficient for one's good deeds to outweigh his bad ones. Hashem expects and requires constant growth.

Because pillars consist of a single stone, they signify status quo and limited potential. In contrast, altars are made of many stones, which suggests many possible levels of achievement and a readiness to acquire additional "stones" of attainment. While the pillars were beloved by Hashem, they reflected a sense of confinement. After "*Matan Torah*" the Jew is obligated to reach forward towards greater spiritual development. The altar represents the model of striving for constant growth, which is beloved by Hashem. We should continually strive to deepen our spirituality as we advance further through *Torah* study and *mitzvah* performance.

A pillar, or monument, is placed at one's graveside in order to indicate that this individual has attained the culmination of his spiritual achievement. Those who survive have the obligation to maintain the spiritual growth process in order to serve as the vehicle for the continued spiritual growth of the deceased.