

## **You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations that you are driving away worshipped their gods: on the high mountains and on the hills, and under every leafy tree. (12:2)**

The Torah instructs us to destroy the idols and the places where they were worshipped. Actually, *halachah* dictates that only the idol itself is destroyed – not the place upon which the idol was set. Furthermore, if a hill, mountain, or tree attached to the ground was designated as an idol, it did not have to be destroyed. What is the meaning of the Torah's exhortation to "destroy all the places"? *Horav Michel Feinstein, zl*, explains that, obviously, idols have no power whatsoever. They consist of nothingness; they are simply a ruse to fool their worshippers. One of the methods employed by its priests to ensnare people was to set the idol upon a high place or beneath a verdant tree. Thus, they implied that the idol was of an elevated status, or that it provided comforting shade. In order to refute these false messages, the Torah enjoined us to remove the idol from the place, exposing its diminutive, powerless nature. It is nothing. Once its foundation is removed, its true insignificance is revealed. Everyone now sees that the idol is comprised of emptiness.

This idea applies equally to the idol's espousers and leadership. When they are revealed in their true colors, when the facade that they represent is exposed, when the people who have followed them see clearly that their leaders are a sham – the hold these people have over them is broken.

It is related that Aristotle, the great philosopher, was caught in an inappropriate act, clearly not becoming an individual of his distinguished status. When asked how he allowed himself to act in this manner, his answer was classic and indicative of his true essence. "Now, I am not Aristotle," he responded. He was implying that, once the mask is removed, one sees the true essence of a person. Aristotle's eminence was based upon a sham. It was all fake. The real Aristotle was capable of acting in the most base and reprehensible manner. Everything else was a façade.

The secular leadership who advocate modernity, who shun tradition and view our way of life as archaic and senseless, are far from elevated people. They live a life of moral abandon, answering only to their whims and passions, while espousing a decadent philosophy and dogma to support their lifestyle. If one were to see them for what they really are, his attachment to them would quickly wane. By piercing through the façade, we pierce their bubble, exposing the bankruptcy of their cause.