

## "These things are the burden of the Bnei Kehas." (4:15)

The *Midrash* illustrates the moral superiority of the *Leviim* by citing the difference between the footwear each wore. While members of the other tribes wore sandals, the *Leviim* who were responsible for carrying the *Mishkan* and its vessels, walked barefoot. *Chazal* also observe that the virtuous *Bnei Kehas*, the actual transporters of the *Aron*, walked backward, so that they did not turn their back on the *Aron*. This *Midrash* demands explanation. While walking barefoot and backward are noble ways to express reverence to the *Aron*, these acts do not demonstrate the *Leviim's* unique virtue.

In order to clarify this *Midrash*, comments *Horav Y.A. Sher, z.l.*, we must first comprehend the rationale behind the divergent practices exhibited by the *Leviim*. We note that the imperative to perform the service while standing barefoot applied only to the *Kohanim*, in order to eliminate the separation between them and the floor of the *Bais Hamikdash*. Indeed, the *Leviim*, who carried the *Aron* in the desert, were permitted to wear sandals. The *Leviim* chose, however, to go barefoot because of their extreme sensitivity regarding the honor due the *Aron*. For example, if during the transporting of the *Aron* a strap on a sandal tore, the individual would unwillingly be compelled to halt his service in order to fasten his strap. It was devotion such as this that was the hallmark of the *Leviim's* virtue. When *Bnei Kehas* walked backward, they similarly exhibited a sense of trust and faith in the *Aron's* "ability" to transport its supporters (uhtaub ,t taub iurtv). The moral superiority of the *Leviim* originated in their boundless devotion to the service of Hashem.