

From fifty years of age, he shall withdraw from the legion of work and no longer work. (8:25)

While the *Levi* must "retire" at age fifty from the heavy labor of carrying the holy vessels on his shoulders, he continues to perform the remainder of *Levite* services, such as singing, closing the gates and loading the wagons. In *Pirkei Avos* 5:21, the *Tanna* addresses the various stages of an individual's life. At age fifty, his advice is valued. The *Bartenura* cites this *pasuk* regarding the *Levi* who leaves the workforce and stays on to help his fellow *Leviim*. He serves them through the advice he gives them. The experience he has gathered throughout the years is of great value to the "freshmen" *Leviim*. What type of advice is he giving them?

In response to this question, the *Chidushei Ha'rim*, was wont to tell the following story: A man once became lost in the forest. For days on end he wandered from place to place with no hope of finding the exit to the forest. Suddenly, he saw an old man coming toward him. Imagine his joy at this encounter; he was saved! He asked the man, "Can you direct me to the exit?" "I am sorry," answered the man, "I have been wandering in this forest for over seventy years and I have still not found a way out. In one way, however, I can help you. I can tell you where I have been so that you will not go there and make the same mistake that I did. You will have to find the correct way out on your own." This is the type of advice that the *Levi* offered. He was in charge of the "gates," telling the younger *Leviim* where not to go. His experience was invaluable in that he was able to guide others to distance themselves from those "gates"/areas that might harm them.