

Do not let the tribe of the Kehati family be cut off... this is what you shall do that they shall live...and assign them, every man to his work and his burden. (4:19,20)

In the Midrash there is a dispute regarding the attitude of Bnei Kehas about their dangerous work. Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas opines that they were so in awe of the sanctity of the Aron Ha'kodesh and the hazards that accompanied it, that they ran to carry the other holy vessels instead. Rabbi Shmuel ben Nachman contends that, on the contrary, despite the risk of death, Bnei Kehas were eager to care for the Aron Hakodesh. Horav Ze'ev Weinberger, Shlita, comments that people exhibit varied attitudes in relating to the Aron, even in contemporary times. Some Jews, although they are great scholars, tend to shy away from taking a stand in any area which presents a risk to their welfare or position. Thus, they defer the great halachic issues, whose ramifications are serious and vital to the collective health of Klal Yisrael or of their respective communities, to those who have more ego than erudition. Others have no fear of the Aron; the sanctity of a given subject does not serve as a deterrent to them from rendering decisions concerning Jewish law for which they have no knowledge or skill. In those days, at least, when Elazar ben Aharon declared who was to perform a specific avodah, people adhered to his word. It is regrettable that today, even when a gadol, leader of the generation, specifies the criteria for who may and should render halachic decisions, some individuals feel that they have the authority to disagree. Today, if one is not innovative, people view him as out of touch with the times. Unfortunately, they do not realize that halachah is timeless and above innovation.