

# HEAVY LOADS

*by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

In the previous sections we discussed that carrying an item in one's hands diverts one's attention from tefillah. When one has the object over one's shoulders, one is no longer disturbed by this fear, since it is strapped to his back. As long as the item is not so heavy and bulky that it disturbs our concentration, it is technically permitted to wear it during tefillah (Shulchan Aruch 97,5).

Wearing a backpack, however, shows that one is involved with activities other than speaking to the person in front of him. For this reason carrying a knapsack is a sign of disrespect. It should be removed before starting to pray.

In Israel, soldiers are obligated to carry a gun. When possible, a weapon should not be brought into shul, but if one must keep it at his side, he should try to put down his gun during tefillah. If for security reasons this is not possible, one can pray with a weapon strapped around his shoulder, even if it is heavy (Aruch Hashulchan 97,7)

Cell phones ringing undoubtedly disturb the concentration of everyone in shul and should definitely be turned off (Responsa L'Horos Nossan 11,9).

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