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*Dedicated in Honor of the "Rob's"  
Rob Kershberg, Rob Jacobs & Rob Friedman*

## The Tishrei Connection – Habit and My Neck

### **"I can't wait!"**

After the Yomim Noraim of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, we come to the simcha of Succos. In the time of the Beis HaMikdash, there was a great simcha (celebration) called the "Simchas Beis HaSho'eiva" where thousands gathered to rejoice over the drawing of the water for the "Nisuch HaMayim (pouring of the water)" service. The Talmud (Succa 51b) describes the joy and elation of the assembled crowd. The Talmud then goes on to explain that a wonderful thing was instituted at the Simchas Beis HaSho'eiva. A separation between men and women was constructed so that the joy did not result in frivolity. The Gemorah goes on to cite a passage from Zechariah that in the future, there will be a great eulogy and sadness and at that time the men and women will eulogize separately. From this we see that if at a time of sadness there needs to be a separation between the genders, certainly then at a time of happiness it is required.

### **Eulogy For...**

The Gemorah goes on to discuss who is the subject of the eulogy to which Zechariah was referring. Rav Dosa says that they will be lamenting the death of Moshiach ben Yosef (who we are told will die in the conflict of Gog U'Mgog). The Rabbanan (Rabbis) say that it is the "death" of the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination), as Rebbe Yehudah says that in the future HaS will bring the Yetzer Hara and slaughter it before both the righteous and also the non-righteous (see the Gemorah there for further explanation of the reaction of both of these groups).

The Sifsai Chaim (Rav Chaim Friedland, zt"l, Mashgiach of Ponevich) cites his rebbe, Rav Dessler, zt"l, who asks, "If the evil inclination is slaughtered, why is there a need to separate the men and the women at that time?"

### **Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks**

Rav Friedland explains that the Yetzer Hara might be dead but even after its influence is gone, people still do things out of habit! The attitude of, "We've always done it this way," compels us to maintain inappropriate behavior like the men and women sitting together. Therefore in the

future, even when there is no more Yetzer Hara, we will have to watch out for “old habits.” Rav Friedland adds that the bad old habits are the result of a downward progression. First a person takes a particular mitzvah lightly and does not give it due importance. Then this lack of respect “grows” into the person being a “ke’shei oref” (stiff-necked).

### **OH My Aching Neck!**

Being “stiff-necked” means that even if someone **shows you for irrefutable proof**, still one will not “turn around,” but rather will continue to do whatever **they** wanted to do. They are stiff-necked so they cannot turn and change. The only hope for such people is a sudden jolt. Rav Friedland proves this from Moshe Rabbeinu. After seeing that the Jews had made the Golden Calf, he immediately broke the luchos (the tablets containing the commandments). HaS informed Moshe while still on the mountain, what the people had done and that therefore the Jews were “stiff-necked.” No matter what HaS does for them, no matter how many miracles they witness, they still want to do their own thing; no proof can change them. The only remedy is the sudden shock. They suddenly see that their leader Moshe is indeed still alive and he had the tablets – WOW! Then right away – **crash** – those tablets are broken (with cataclysmic ramifications). Indeed, this sudden shock treatment worked (which is what we commemorate during the time from the fast of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz until Yom Kippur – the spiritual journey away from the calf and back to HaS).

### **Spiritual Chiropractor**

Rav Friedland zt”l goes on to explain that we need to be aware of our old bad habits because they can quickly degenerate into callousing our soul. The treatment is the above shock therapy, but we all hope that we do not have to experience something like that (it is interesting that the events of “9/11” are at this time of year – they were unfortunately and certainly this type of “shock therapy” before the Yomim Noraim).

The other way to get this effect, says Rav Friedland zt”l, is through tefila (prayer) and the study of mussar. During these crucial days, we all want to reach a level of teshuvah (repentance). Two crucial ingredients are for us to 1) try as much as possible to focus our tefillos and, 2) take some specific time of the day to focus on the study of mussar! In this way may we all merit a healthy and happy new year! Amen.