

## *Fathers and Sons and Eliyahu HaNavi*

By: YAACOV KRAUSZ

The הפטרה for שבת הגדול comes from the last chapter of the last *sefer* of כלל ישראל. This is the last direct communication from Hashem to נביאים. After this, we will not have נבואה until Mashiach comes. Hashem knows this will be our last chance to hear His message so it would stand to reason that this message must be a very special one with a very significant lesson for us. Indeed, the last three verses of the הפטרה are very powerful: זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר צויתי אותו בחרב על כל ישראל חקים ומשפטים: הנה אנכי שלח לכם את אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא: והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם פן אבוא והכיתי את הארץ חרם.<sup>1</sup>

First Hashem charges us to be faithful to the Torah that we received at Har Sinai. Then, since this will be the last נבואה for a very long time, and for many generations, Hashem promises and reassures כלל ישראל that there will indeed be a chance for a final גאולה. Hashem will send Eliyahu HaNavi to herald the judgment day, the coming of Mashiach and the return of Hashem's glory. The פסוק then continues to detail the great and important task that Eliyahu will need to accomplish for this גאולה to take place. והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם. This is so important that Hashem warns that if it does not happen פן אבוא והכיתי את הארץ חרם, He will destroy the world.<sup>2</sup>

והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם seems to be an extremely important accomplishment. In fact, the Yerushalmi quotes ר' פינחס בן ר' יאיר who places the coming of Eliyahu HaNavi at the very top of his step-by-step formula for spiritual achievement.

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<sup>1</sup> “Remember the teachings of my servant Moshe, the statutes and laws that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the arrival of the great and awesome day of Hashem.” For now we will leave the last פסוק untranslated as this is the subject of the article.

<sup>2</sup> “Lest I come and smite the world with utter destruction.”

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תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת שבת פרק א דף ג טור ג/ה"ג  
**ר' פינחס בן יאיר אומר זריזות מביאה לידי נקיות נקיות מביאה לידי טהרה**  
**טהרה מביאה לידי קדושה קדושה לידי ענוה ענוה לידי יראת חט יראת חט**  
**לידי רוח הקודש רוח הקודש לידי חסידות חסידות לידי תחיית המתים**  
**תחיית המתים לידי אליהו זכור לטוב דכתיב הנה אנכי שולח לכם את**  
**אליה הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' הגדול והנורא והשיב לב אבות על בנים**  
**ולב בנים על אבותם.<sup>3</sup>**

והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם? The last mishnah in מסכת עדיות quotes four opinions as to what will happen when Eliyahu HaNavi comes.

משנה מסכת עדיות פרק ח  
 אמר רבי יהושע מקובל אני מרבן יוחנן בן זכאי ששמע מרבו ורבו מרבו  
 הלכה למשה מסיני שאין **אליהו בא** לטמא ולטהר לרחק ולקרוב אלא לרחק  
 המקורבין בזרוע ולקרוב המרוחקין בזרוע משפחת בית צריפה היתה בעבר  
 הירדן ורחקה בן ציון בזרוע ועוד אחרת היתה שם וקרבה בן ציון בזרוע כגון  
 אלו אליהו בא לטמא ולטהר לרחק ולקרוב רבי יהודה אומר לקרב אבל לא  
 לרחק רבי שמעון אומר להשוות המחלוקת ו**חכמים אומרים לא לרחק ולא**  
**לקרב אלא לעשות שלום בעולם שנאמר (מלאכי ג') הנני שולח לכם את**  
**אליה הנביא וגומר והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם.<sup>4</sup>**

The first two opinions relate to the issue of how Eliyahu will go about establishing proper יוחסין (genealogy) which we can understand is very important for the future of ישראל. Then רבי שמעון says that he

<sup>3</sup> R. Pinchas ben Yair says zeal leads to cleanliness, cleanliness to purity, purity to holiness, holiness to humility, humility to fear of sin, fear of sin to divine inspiration, divine inspiration to piety, piety to the resurrection of the dead, resurrection of the dead to the arrival of Eliyahu HaNavi as it is written (Malachi 3: 23–24), “Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the arrival of the great and awesome day of Hashem. **והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם.**”

<sup>4</sup> R. Yehoshua said, I have a tradition from רבן יוחנן בן זכאי going all the way back to משה that Eliyahu will not come to declare impure and pure or to estrange or draw near but rather to estrange those (families) that were brought near by force and to bring near those that were estranged by force (the mishnah provides two examples)... R. Yehudah says he [Eliyahu] will bring [families] near but will not push [families] away. R. Shimon says [Eliyahu will come] to reconcile disputes. The Sages say he will come neither to distance [families] or to bring them close but rather to bring peace to the world as it is written **והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם.** “Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah etc...” (מלאכי ג')

will reconcile disputes. This is commonly taken to mean that he will resolve all the unresolved questions that the גמרא leaves as תיקון.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the חכמים say that Eliyahu HaNavi will come to bring peace to the world and they quote our פסוק as the source for their opinion. שלום is certainly an incredibly meaningful and worthwhile dream and if Eliyahu could bring שלום to the world it would be a tremendous blessing and accomplishment.

So how does והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם relate to שלום? Interestingly, there seem to be two schools of thought as to how to interpret the פסוק. ArtScroll in the Stone Edition of חמשה חומשי תורה translates והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם as “He shall restore the hearts of fathers to children and the heart of children to their fathers.” Apparently, there needs to be a reconciliation between the generations. What is the nature of their estrangement? More importantly, what is the great accomplishment that Eliyahu HaNavi will cause by their reconciliation?<sup>6</sup>

חידושים על המשנה מסכת עדיות פרק ח in his מהרש"א writes,

וחכמים אומרים לא לרחק ולא לקרב אלא לעשות שלום בעולם כו'. הרמב"ם פירשו לענין שנאה ממש זה על זה וקרא דמייתי והשיב לב אבות וגו' לא משמע כן דמה ענין אבות ובנים לגבי שנאה שבועולם ויותר קשה להראב"ד שפירשו לענין שלום מן העובדי כוכבים גם שלום ביניהם דקאמר לא משמע כן והנראה לפרש לדברי חכמים נמי לענין יחוס דלא בא לרחק ולקרב אלא לעשות שלום ביניהם לפי שיש לפעמים שהאב יש לו לב על בנו לומר שנשא אשה שאינה הוגנת לו ופוגם את משפחתו ובדבר זה והשיב לב אבות וגו'... לעשות ביניהם שלום<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, the ברטנורא reinterprets אבות על בנים to mean חכמים and תלמידים so that the פסוק serves as a proof-text for רבי שמעון's opinion as well.

<sup>6</sup> The ArtScroll Mishnah series also translates as, “He will reconcile fathers to sons...” Similarly, the ArtScroll Schottenstein Talmud translates the פסוק as “And he will reconcile the hearts of the fathers to sons...” The Stone edition of *Tanach*, first published in 1993, translates it as “He shall return [to Hashem]...” However, subsequent editions of the Stone Edition of חמשה חומשי תורה did not change their translation.

<sup>7</sup> The Sages say he will come neither to distance [families] nor to bring them close but rather to bring peace to the world etc... Maimonides explains this opinion to refer to hatred between people. However, the verse quoted “and I will reconcile the hearts of fathers etc...” does not mean this. For what do fathers and sons have to do with hatred in the world? The explanation of the פסוק is even more difficult. He explains that this refers to granting [the Jews] peace from the nations. However, “peace between them” [i.e. fathers and

מהרש"א disagrees with the רמב"ם, who has Eliyahu removing all hatred from people's hearts, and he likes the הראב"ד's interpretation of peace between nations even less. מהרש"א says that Eliyahu will reconcile fathers and children in case they married someone of whom the other disapproved. According to מהרש"א, this is the great accomplishment that Eliyahu HaNavi will cause to come about at the end of days. This is the one thing that needs to be rectified in order for the גאולה to occur. If this does not happen then Hashem says there is no point in allowing the world to exist any longer.

Similarly, R. Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, in his שפתי צדיקים, נביאים writes:

בפסוק והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם... ר"ל שהאבות יתיישבו את לבם על בניהם להדריכם בדרך אמת... לקיים המצוה של כיבוד אב כתיקונה.<sup>8</sup>

The שפתי צדיקים says that Eliyahu will come to improve the level of observance of the *mitzvah* of כיבוד אב. Others such as מראה יחזקאל —R. Yechezkel Panet, a disciple of R. Menachem Mendel—writes similarly that Eliyahu will correct the lack of proper education that the parents provided for their children.<sup>9</sup>

The common theme in these פירושים is that there is some discord between fathers and sons and Eliyahu HaNavi will reconcile those differences to make peace between them. That is what the mishnah means when it quotes the opinion of the חכמים who say לעשות שלום בעולם. It is certainly true that getting along with one's parents is a laudable goal. However, it is a little difficult to imagine that the future existence of the world as we know it hangs in the balance waiting to see if this goal is achieved.

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sons] does not mean this. In my opinion, the Sages agree that as far as genealogy is concerned he [Eliyahu] will not come to distance or bring near but rather to create peace between them [fathers and sons] because sometimes a father will be upset with his son because the son married a woman who was not appropriate for him and this damages the family. And in this matter the verse teaches that they will be reconciled and there will be peace between them.

<sup>8</sup> The verse “והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם” means to say that fathers will concentrate their hearts to guide their sons on the true path... in order that they will observe the commandment to honor their fathers properly.

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, שפת אמת interprets the פסוק as predicting a reconciliation between the children and their fathers. According to him, however, the fathers are our forefathers יעקב and יצחק, אברהם. There will be a return to the values and practices of the אבות.

The second way to interpret the פסוק of והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב רש"י on the פסוק is introduced to us by a one-word commentary by רש"י on the פסוק in ג' פרק, מלאכי פרק ג' פסוק.

Now the word והשיב no longer means to restore or to reconcile but comes from the word תשובה, to repent. Eliyahu HaNavi will usher in an era of תשובה. As the אבן עזרא says, תשובה אל השם אבות, והנה כולם יהיו לב אחד לשוב אל השם אבות, ובנים, the fathers together with the children will be inspired to return to Hashem. Similarly, מצודת דוד says שיישב האבות עם הבנים והבנים עם האבות, כולם יחד תשובה together. Similarly, the רד"ק explains רד"ק כמו עם בנים וכן. The words על לב אבות על אבותם and על בנים על אבותם mean with their sons and with their fathers meaning fathers and sons together.<sup>10</sup>

The word על generally means "on" but it can also mean "with" as in והקרבתם על הלחם שבעת כבשים תמימם בני שנה<sup>11</sup> where על הלחם means with the bread.

ע"י בנים translates the word "על" in the פסוק to mean through the influence of the children. מצודת ציון quotes both meanings of the word על and says that the תשובה will take place either through the influence of the children or together with the children, "על בנים - ר"ל על ידי בנים או על הוא כמו עם".

The common theme in these פירושים is that there will be a great תשובה movement and all of ישראל כלל will be united in the service of Hashem. This is the task set before Eliyahu HaNavi. His great challenge will be to inspire the nation to return to Hashem. If he is successful, it will usher in the coming of Mashiach.

So why is the מהרש"א so adamant to insist that the meaning of the פסוק relates to reconciling fathers to children and children to fathers? Let us look at the מהרש"א again. His commentary to the mishnah in עדיות as printed in the back of the Vilna ש"ס reads,

וחכמים אומרים לא לרחק ולא לקרב אלא לעשות שלום בעולם כו'. הרמב"ם פירשו לענין שנאה ממש זה על זה וקרא דמייתי והשיב לב אבות וגו' לא משמע כן דמה ענין אבות ובנים לגבי שנאה שבעולם ויותר קשה להראב"ד

<sup>10</sup> reinterprets פרי צדיק בראשית לחנוכה in ר' צדוק הכהן to mean that Eliyahu will bring peace to the inner struggle that each person experiences when he battles his inner הרע. והשיב לב means that a person's לב, his inner being, will experience a complete תשובה.

<sup>11</sup> And you shall offer seven one-year-old unblemished sheep with the bread.

שפירשו לענין שלום מן העובדי כוכבים גם שלום ביניהם דקאמר לא משמע כן והנראה לפרש לדברי חכמים נמי לענין יחוס דלא בא לרחק ולקרב אלא לעשות שלוח ביניהם לפי שיש לפעמים שהאב יש לו לב על בנו לומר שנשא אשה שאינה הוגנת לו ופוגם את משפחתו ובדבר זה והשיב לב אבות וגו'...לעשות ביניהם שלום.<sup>12</sup>

He rejects the interpretation of the רב"ד because it does not fit with the text of the mishnah which he has as saying **ביניהם**, שלום (גם שלום, **ביניהם** פסוק to mean reconciling the heart of fathers to children (והשיב לב אבות) and חכמים אומרים לא לרחק ולא לקרב אלא לעשות שלום בעולם). He writes this even though the title of the piece as printed reads **ועולם**.

This is the text of מהרש"א that found in the back of our Vilna ש"ס. However, if we look at very early editions of the מהרש"א we find that the original דבור המתחיל reads **שלום ביניהם**. See Figure 1 below which is a copy of the 1682 edition of the חידושי מהרש"א printed in Frankfurt.



Figure 1

<sup>12</sup> Translation: The Sages say he will come neither to distance [families] nor to bring them close but rather to bring peace to the world... The explanation of the רב"ד is even more difficult. He explains that this refers to granting [the Jews] peace from the nations. However, "peace between them" [i.e. fathers and sons] does not mean this... and they will be reconciled and there will be peace between them.

In fact, it was not only the מהרש"א who had the גירסא of לעשות שלום writes, **ביניהם**. The רמב"ם in ב הלכה ב פרק יב הלכה ב writes,

אמרו חכמים אין בין העולם הזה לימות המשיח אלא שיעבוד מלכות בלבד... ושקודם מלחמת גוג ומגוג יעמוד נביא לישר ישראל ולהכין לבם, שנאמר הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליה וגו', ואינו בא לא לטמא הטהור, ולא לטהר הטמא... אלא לשום שלום בעולם, שנאמר והשיב לב אבות על בנים.

He clearly had the גירסא which read שלום בעולם. However the כסף הלכה commenting on this רמב"ם and telling us the source for this משנה says,

ואינו בא לא לטמא וכו'. בסוף עדיות איפליגו תנאי אם אליהו בא לטמא ולטהר לרחק ולקרב או לא ופוסק רבינו כחכמים שאומרים שם שאינו בא לרחק ולא לקרב אלא לעשות שלום ביניהם

The כסף משנה quotes the mishnah in מסכת עדיות and apparently he too had the גירסא which read לעשות שלום ביניהם.

This was clearly not the text of רש"י or רמב"ם. They all had the גירסא of שלום בעולם. מלאכי in פסוק in רש"י his commentary on the פסוק writes,

**על בנים - ע"י בנים** יאמר לבנים דרך אהבה ורצון לכו ודברו אל אבותיכם לאחוז בדרכי המקום וכן ולב בנים על אבותם כך שמעתי משמו של ר' מנחם ור"ד במס' עדיות לשום שלום בעולם.<sup>13</sup>

in his פירוש on the mishnah in מסכת עדיות writes, רמב"ם

וחכמים אומרים... העוול הוא השנאה שיש בין בני אדם לפי שהיא שנאת חנם והוא עושה לו עוול בשנאתו אותו והוא אמרם לעשות שלום בעולם.<sup>14</sup>

וחכ"א לעשות writes, מסכת עדיות on the mishnah in פירוש רמב"ם שלום בעולם כלומר לעשות שלום לישראל מן האומות.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> **על בנים - ע"י בנים**: through the children. Say to the children affectionately and appeasingly, go and speak to your fathers to adopt the ways of Hashem. And, similarly, the hearts of the children through the fathers. So I heard in the name of R. Menachem. And our Sages in Tractate *Eduyos* expounded it to mean לשום שלום בעולם, to bring peace to the world.

<sup>14</sup> And the Sages say...the injustice is the hatred that exists between people because it is baseless hatred. And he does him an injustice when he hates him. This what the Sages mean when they say [that Eliyahu will come] "to bring peace to the world."

<sup>15</sup> And the Sages say [that Eliyahu will come] "to bring peace to the world" meaning to grant the Jews peace from the nations.

It is clear that these commentators in France, Egypt and Provence had the **גירסא** in the mishnah which reads **שלום בעולם**.

What about the manuscript evidence for the mishnah itself?

Cambridge has **שלום בעולם** כתב יד.<sup>16</sup>

Kaufman has **שלום בעולם** כתב יד.<sup>17</sup>

Parma has **שלום בעולם** כתב יד.<sup>18, 19</sup>

So why did **משהרש"א** and **כסף משנה** quote the mishnah in **מסכת עדיות** as reading **שלום ביניהם**? The answer may be because of a mistake that crept into the text of the Mishnah. The first complete set of printed Talmud was published by Daniel Bomberg with the permission of Pope Leo X in Venice in the year 1520. That volume, which includes the commentary of **רמב"ם**, has **לעשות שלום ביניהם**. That edition, which was estimated to have 1500 copies, sold out quickly even though the cost of the set amounted to almost the yearly wage of a typesetter. Two more editions of 1500 sets each were printed. The 1546 edition had the commentaries of both **רמב"ם** and **ראב"ד**. It too reads **לעשות שלום ביניהם** even though the commentaries were clearly explaining the mishnah as if it said **בעולם**. This mistake in the text of the Talmud has been perpetuated through the centuries. The Vilna **ש"ס** published by the Romm family in 1886 and which is the predominant text of Talmud used throughout the Jewish world today also has **לעשות שלום ביניהם**.

How did this mistake make its way into the Bomberg Talmud? There was an earlier printed edition of **מסכת עדיות**. The first printed edition of the Mishnah was published in Naples in 1492. This edition also has the **גירסא** as **לעשות שלום ביניהם**. It is likely that Bomberg simply worked off the Naples edition. That would have been much easier than transcribing from a manuscript. How did the mistake get into the **דפוס הנפולי**? That is a matter of conjecture. The words **בעולם** and **ביניהם** each begin with a "ב" and end in a "ם." Perhaps there was a smudge in the

<sup>16</sup> <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/mishna/showmi1.asp?mishnanum=7&pereknum=008&masecet=37&mnusriptnum=5434&p=1&masecetindex=37&perekindex=8&numamud=7&manuscriptindex=2&k=>

<sup>17</sup> <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/mishna/showmi1.asp?mishnanum=7&pereknum=008&masecet=37&mnusriptnum=1723&p=1&masecetindex=37&perekindex=8&numamud=7&manuscriptindex=1&k=>

<sup>18</sup> <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/talmud/mishna/showmi1.asp?mishnanum=7&pereknum=008&masecet=37&mnusriptnum=240&p=1&masecetindex=37&perekindex=8&numamud=7&manuscriptindex=4&k=>

<sup>19</sup> Mishna Codex Paris 328-329 also has **לעשות שלום בעולם**.



manuscript and the printer made his best guess as to the correct text. I was not able to find a manuscript that had the text as **ביניהם**.

In any case, once the Talmud was printed it made no sense to go through the painstaking and laborious process of writing manuscript copies and it is likely that R. Yosef Karo, who lived from 1488 to 1575, had a copy of the printed ש"ס. If he did, then he read לעשות שלום ביניהם in the last mishnah in מסכת עדיות and he therefore noted that as the source for the רמב"ם in his משנה כסף. However, R. Karo did not take the next step of interpreting the פסוק incorrectly. He simply noted that the source for the הלכה in the רמב"ם was our mishnah.

R. Shmuel Eidels, the מהרש"א (1555–1631), was also probably using the Bomberg edition. He had the commentaries of רמב"ם and ראב"ד, which were printed in the Bomberg edition, and he read their interpretations of the mishnah. He disagreed with their opinions because he could not reconcile their interpretations with the text of the mishnah as he clearly states in his own commentary. He therefore invents a new interpretation for והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם to match the text of the mishnah, which looks to reconcile fathers to sons and sons to fathers.

Did מהרש"א really believe that the fate of the world rested on this reconciliation; that the great accomplishment of Eliyahu HaNavi that would herald the coming of the end of days depended on fathers and sons getting along? I do not think so.<sup>20</sup> The mishnah is concerned with the issue of יוחסין, the genealogical purity of כלל ישראל. More precisely, the mishnah teaches that we are not to be concerned with genealogical purity in most cases. Whoever has a presumption of being Jewish will still be considered Jewish when Mashiach comes. רבי יהושע says that only when a flagrant injustice was committed will Eliyahu come and clarify the status of the people involved (לרחק המקורבין בזרוע ולקרוב המרוחקין) (בזרוע). רבי יהודה says that even in this situation Eliyahu's intention will be to include rather than to exclude (לקרוב אבל לא לרחק). The חכמים say לא **ביניהם** לרחק ולא לקרוב אלא לעשות שלום ביניהם. The חכמים are using the same terminology of לרחק and לקרוב so it stands to reason that they are also opining about the issue of יוחסין. Since the Mishnah uses והשיב לב אבותם על אבותם as a proof-text to their opinion it further stands to reason that the issue is one which involves fathers and sons. מהרש"א

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<sup>20</sup> Mossad Harav Kook עשר תרי נביא תרי עשר footnote 65 also asks how is it possible that the fate of the world is in jeopardy because of fathers and sons not getting along.

would fully understand that a literal translation of the פסוק could not mean fathers to sons and sons to fathers. The Hebrew word for “to” is על not אל. However, חז”ל very often interpret פסוקים homiletically and would use their literary license to translate words and phrases to make a point. In this case, מהרש”א likely surmised that the חכמים were making liberal use of the פסוק to bolster their position. In addition, quoting the פסוק of אבות לב אביב allows the מסכת to end on a decidedly positive note.

מהרש”א was undoubtedly aware that all of the classic commentators of the last two ספר מלאכי in פסוקים had much greater expectations for that awesome and fateful day that would be ushered in by the great and important task that Eliyahu will need to accomplish for the גאולה שלמה to take place. The mishnah was dealing with the narrow issue of יוחסין about which there was a tradition going back to a משיח מסיני that this issue would be dealt with by Eliyahu. However, that does not mean that this was the only issue or the greatest challenge confronting Eliyahu. Surely מהרש”א would agree that for the גאולה שלמה to take place Eliyahu would need to inspire a great תשובה movement, to remove any שנאת הנם that may exist and to usher in an age of universal peace. May this take place speedily in our days.

In conclusion: The vast majority of מפרשים translate והשיב לב אבות as “He returns the hearts of the fathers with the sons and the hearts of the sons with the fathers.” This is based on the fact that the word על means “with” as in עם or “via” as in ידי. The popular use of the פסוק by public speakers and writers as teaching a point about the reconciliation between generations may be based on a misreading of the last mishnah in מסכת עדיות. This misreading was likely caused by a change in the text of the Talmud first introduced when the Mishnah was originally set to type in 1492. This mistake has been perpetuated in subsequent printings of the Talmud including the Vilna ש”ס which is the text used by the vast majority of Jews in the world today. The מהרש”א, who was likewise misled by the mistaken גירסא in the printed ש”ס, interpreted the פסוק as speaking about reconciliation between fathers and sons. This was likely meant not as a literal translation of the פסוק but as a homiletic exposition. However, translators who continue to render the פסוק in this way are in error. ❧