



## Talmud Tales – Session 25 – Crowns on the Letters

### **BT Menachot 29b**

Said R. Judah said Rav: At the time that Moses went up on high to the heavens, he found the Holy One sitting, affixing crowns to the letters [of the Torah]. He said to him, “Lord of the universe, who is stopping you [from regarding the document as perfect without these additional crowns on the letters]?”

God said to him, “There is a man who is going to arrive at the end of many generations, and Akiva b. Joseph is his name, who is going to interpret on the basis of each point of the crowns heaps and heaps of laws.”

He said to him, “Master of the Universe, show him to me.”

God said to him, “Turn around.”

Moses turned around and took a seat at the end of the eighth row [of R. Akiva’s academy] but he could not grasp what the people were saying. He felt faint. But when the discourse reached a certain matter, and the disciples said, ‘Rabbi, how do you know this?’ and he answered, ‘It is a law given to Moses from Sinai,’ he regained his composure.

He went and came before the Holy One. He said before him, “Master of the Universe, how come you have someone like that and yet you give the Torah through me?”

He said to him, “Silence! That is how the thought came to Me.”

He said to him, “Master of the Universe, you have shown me his Torah, now show me his reward.”

He said to him, “Turn around.”

He turned around and saw R. Akiva’s flesh being weighed out at the butcher-stalls in the market.

He said to him, “Master of the Universe, This is Torah and this is its reward?!”

He said to him, “Silence! That is how the thought came to Me.”