

[MOSES RETURNS AS A YESHIVA BOY]

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Rab Judah said in the name of Rab,¹ When Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing coronets to the letters.² Said Moses, 'Lord of the Universe, Who stays Thy hand?³ He⁴ answered, 'There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each little heaps and heaps of laws'.⁵ 'Lord of the Universe', said Moses; 'permit me to see him'. He replied, 'Turn thee round'. Moses went and sat down behind eight rows⁶ [and listened to the discourses upon the law]. Not being able to follow their arguments he was ill at ease, but when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said to the master 'Whence do you know it?' and the latter replied 'It is a law given unto Moses at Sinai' he was comforted. Thereupon he returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, 'Lord of the Universe, Thou hast such a man and Thou givest the Torah by me!' He replied, 'Be silent, for such is My decree'. Then said Moses, 'Lord of the Universe, Thou hast shown me his Torah, show me his reward'. 'Turn thee round', said He; and Moses turned round and saw them weighing out his flesh at the market-stalls.⁷ 'Lord of the Universe', cried Moses, 'such Torah, and such a reward! He replied, 'Be silent, for such is My decree'.

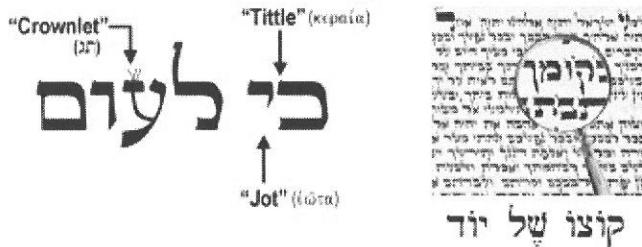
TRANSLATED BY Eli Cashdan.

1. He is so known only by his title (*rab* is the Hebrew word for *rabbī*).
2. Crownlike flourishes, called *tagin*, that embellish certain letters of the Hebrew alphabet in

5. Rabbi Akiba will derive oral Torah from these embellishments.
6. I.e., rows of Akiba's students.

Torah scrolls.
3. I.e., why are these *tagin* necessary?
4. I.e., God.

7. Akiba died as a martyr under Roman persecutions in 135 C.E.



2 pages, typed and double-spaced. Due Wednesday February 1st.

Topic for first short paper

Explain the significance of the selection from the Babylonian *Talmud* that appears on the reverse of this sheet. This text was likely written during the 2nd century c.e. (Rabbi Akiba was a leading member of the Rabbinical community at this time). Be specific about how this text indicates something about the relationship between the Law as received by the prophet Moses at Sinai and the law as interpreted and explained by the Talmudic Rabbis in the middle ages. Do the "heaps and heaps of laws" provided by the Rabbis change the substance of the commandments? Explain the place of these Talmudic interpretations in Judaism generally by putting them in the context of Jewish history as a whole. Also explain the attitude this text represents G*d as having towards the world. How do you understand G*d's repeated instruction to "be silent, for such is My decree?" What does this seem to indicate about how Jews should regard both G*d and their own place in G*d's creation?