

Two Sinais

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: בְּשַׁעַה שְׁעָלָה מִשָּׁה לְמָרוֹם מִצְאוֹ לְהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׁיֹשֵׁב וְקוֹשֵׁר כְּתָרִים לְאוֹתֵינּוּ. אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מִי מַעֲבֵב עַל יְדָד? אָמַר לוֹ: אָדָם אֶחָד יֵשׁ שְׁעֵתִיד לְהִיּוֹת בְּסוּף כְּמָה דוֹרוֹת וְעַקִּיבָא בְּן יוֹסֵף שָׁמוֹ שְׁעֵתִיד לְדְרוֹשׁ עַל כָּל קוֹץ וְקוֹץ תִּילִין תִּילִין שֶׁל הַלְכוֹת. אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, הֲרֵאֵהוּ לִי! אָמַר לוֹ: חֲזוֹר לְאַחֲרֶיךָ. הִלָּךְ וַיָּשֶׁב בְּסוּף שְׁמוֹנֶה שׁוּרוֹת וְלֹא הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ מַה הֵן אוֹמְרִים. תִּשֵּׁשׁ כָּחוּ. פִּיּוֹן שְׁהֲגִיעַ לְדָבָר אֶחָד אָמְרוּ לוֹ תִלְמִידָיו: רַבִּי, מִנֵּין לָךְ? אָמַר לָהֶן: הִלְכָה לְמִשָּׁה מְסִינִי. נִתְיַשְׁבָּה דְעֵתוֹ. חֲזַר וּבָא לְפָנָי הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא. אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, יֵשׁ לָךְ אָדָם כְּזֶה וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן תּוֹרָה עַל יְדֵי? אָמַר לוֹ: שְׁתוּק! כִּדְ עָלָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לְפָנָי. אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, הֲרֵאֵנִי שְׁכָרוֹ. אָמַר לוֹ: חֲזוֹר [לְאַחֲרֶיךָ]. חֲזַר לְאַחֲרָיו. רָאָה שְׁשׂוּקְלִין בְּשָׂרוֹ בְּמַקּוּלִין. אָמַר לְפָנָיו: רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, זֹו תּוֹרָה וְזֹו שְׁכָרָה? אָמַר לוֹ: שְׁתוּק! כִּדְ עָלָה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה לְפָנָי.

When Moses went up to the heavens to receive the Torah, he found the Holy One, blessed be He, sitting in front of a Torah scroll and crowning certain of the letters with the pen strokes that would adorn those particular letters in every Torah for all time. Moses said: Master of the World, who is it who is delaying you? God responded: There is a man who will be in the future, many generations from now, Akiba ben Yosef is his name. He will, in the future, find meaning not only in every word and letter of the Torah, but he will even derive mounds of meaning from which letters are adorned and which letters are not.

Moses said: Master of the World, Show him to me! God said: Turn around. Moses did so, and he found himself sitting in the eighth row of Rabbi Akiba's students. Moses did not understand anything that they were saying and he became depressed. But when they arrived at a particular matter, Rabbi Akiba's students said to him: Rabbi, how do you derive this? He said to them: This is a law given to Moses on Sinai. At this, Moses' mind was settled.

He turned around and came before the Holy One and said: Master of the World, you have a man such as this and you give the Torah through me? Silence! God said to him. This is how it has come up in my plan. Moses said: You have shown me his Torah; show me his reward. God said to him: Turn around. He turned around and saw the Romans weighing out Akiba's flesh in the meat market. Moses protested: Master of the World, This is Torah and this is its reward? God replied: Silence! This is how it has come up in my plan.

(Babylonian Talmud Menachot 29b)