

# Rabbinic Responses to Christian Thought

## I. Role of Law

### 1. Gal 3:10-12

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."

### 2a. Matt 5:18-19

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven

### 2b. Romans 7:6

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

### 3. Sifre Bamidbar 112

Whoever says, "I accept all the Torah except for this one thing," he despises the word of God.

### 3. ספרי במדבר פיסקא קיב

אמר כל התורה כולה אני מקבל עלי חוץ מדבר זה זהו כי דבר ה' בזה

## II. Legal Interpretation

### 4. Mark 2:23-28

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

### 5. Rom. 2:28-29

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

### 6. Sifrei Bamidbar 112

"Because he has despised the word of God" – this is the Sadducee. "And his commandments he has broken" – this is the Apikores. Another reading: "Because he has

### ספרי במדבר פיסקא קיב

כי דבר ה' בזה זה צדוקי ואת מצותו הפר זה אפיקורוס. ד"א כי דבר ה' בזה זה המגלה פנים בתורה ואת מצותו הפר זה המפר ברית בשר

despised the word of God" – this is the one who gives a wrong interpretation of the Torah. "And his commandment he has broken" – <u>this is the one who makes void the covenant of the flesh.</u>	
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### III. Personal Responsibility and Following Torah

#### 7. Romans 8:3

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

#### 8. Romans 7:14-20

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

<p><b>9. B. Avoda Zara 5b</b>  R. Johanan said on behalf of R. Bana'ah:  What is the meaning of the verse, Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the donkey? [It means this: <u>Blessed is Israel; when they occupy themselves with Torah and acts of kindness their inclination is mastered by them, not they by their inclination</u></p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף ה עמוד ב</b>  א"ר יוחנן משום רבי בנאה, מאי דכתיב:  + ישעיהו לב+ אשריכם זורעי על כל מים משלחי  רגל השור והחמור? אשריהם ישראל, בזמן  שעוסקין בתורה ובגמילות חסדים - יצרם מסור  בידם ואין הם מסורים ביד יצרם</p>
<p><b>10. B. Ta'anit 7a</b>  It has been taught in a Baraitha: R. Banna'ah used to say: Whosoever occupies himself with the Torah for its own sake his learning becomes an elixir of life to him, for it is said, It is a tree of life to them that grasp it; and it is further said, It shall be as health to thy navel; and it is also said, For whoso findeth me findeth life. But, whosoever occupies himself with the Torah not for its own sake, it becomes to him a deadly poison, as it is said, My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and 'arifa surely means, death, as it is said, And they shall break [we'arfu] the heifer's neck there in the valley.</p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף ז עמוד א</b>  תניא, היה רבי בנאה אומר: כל העוסק בתורה  לשמה תורתו נעשית לו סם חיים, שנאמר +משלי  ג'+ עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה, ואומר +משלי  ג'+ רפאות תהי לשרך, ואומר +משלי ח'+ כי  מצאי מצא חיים. וכל העוסק בתורה שלא לשמה  נעשית לו סם המות, שנאמר יערף כמטר לקחי,  ואין עריפה אלא הריגה, שנאמר +דברים כ"א+  וערפו שם את העגלה בנחל</p>

#### IV. Predestination and Sin

##### 11. Mark 5:29-30

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

<p><b>12. M. Avot 3:15</b> R. Akiva says: All is seen, and permission is given, and the world is judged with goodness, and everything is in accordance with the reponderance of [man's] deed[s].</p>	<p><b>משנה מסכת אבות פרק ג משנה טו</b> (ר. עקיבא אומר) הכל צפוי והרשות נתונה ובטוב העולם נדון והכל לפי רוב המעשה :</p>
<p><b>13. B. Beracht 33a</b> And R. Hanina said, all is in the hands of heaven except for the fear of heaven, for it is said, "and now Israel what does God ask of you but to fear him?" (Dev. 10:12)</p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לג עמוד ב</b> ואמר רבי חנינא: הכל בידי שמים - חוץ מיראת שמים, שנאמר +דברים י"ו+ : ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלהיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה</p>
<p><b>14. B. Hagigga 15a</b> After his apostasy, Aher asked R. Meir: What is the meaning of the verse: Gold and glass cannot equal it; neither shall the exchange thereof be vessels of fine gold? He answered: These are the words of the Torah, which are hard to acquire like vessels of fine gold, but are easily destroyed like vessels of glass. Said [Aher] to him: R. Akiba, thy master, did not explain thus, but [as follows]: Just as vessels of gold and vessels of glass, though they be broken, have a remedy, even so a scholar, though he has sinned, has a remedy.</p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת חגיגה דף טו עמוד א</b> שאל אחר את רבי מאיר לאחר שיצא לתרבות רעה: מאי דכתיב +איוב כ"ח+ לא יערכנה זהב וזכוכית ותמורתה כלי פז - אמר לו: אלו דברי תורה, שקשין לקנותן ככלי זהב וכלי פז, ונוחין לאבדן ככלי זכוכית. - אמר לו: רבי עקיבא רבך לא אמר כך, אלא: מה כלי זהב וכלי זכוכית, אף על פי שנשברו יש להם תקנה - אף תלמיד חכם, אף על פי שסרח יש לו תקנה</p>

#### V. Sources of Power

##### 15. Romans 13:1-6

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

<p><b>16. B. Sanhedrin 49a</b>  He said: It is written, Whosoever he be that shall rebel against thy [the King's] commandments and shall not hearken unto thy words in all that you commanded him, he shall be put to death. Now, one might have thought that this holds good even [when the transgression is committed] for the sake of the study of the law: it is therefore written, "<u>only</u>" [Rak] be strong and of good courage</p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף מט עמוד א</b>  אמר : כתיב + יהושע אי+ כל איש אשר ימרה את פיך ולא ישמע את דבריך לכל אשר תצוונו יומת, יכול אפילו לדברי תורה - תלמוד לומר, רק חזק ואמץ.</p>
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**17. Matt. 9:6**

But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...."  
Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home

**VI. Miracles, and Faith**

**18. John 4:46-54**

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour." Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed. This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee.

<p><b>19. B. Berakhot 34b</b>  Our Rabbis taught: Once the son of R. Gamaliel fell ill. He sent two scholars to R. Hanina b. Dosa to ask him to pray for him. When he saw them he went up to an upper chamber and prayed for him. When he came down he said to them: Go, the fever has left him; They said to him: Are you a prophet? <u>He replied: I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I learnt this from experience. If my prayer is fluent in my mouth, I know that he is accepted: but if not, I know that he is rejected.</u></p>	<p><b>תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף לד עמוד ב</b>  תנו רבנן : מעשה שחלה בנו של רבן גמליאל, שגר שני תלמידי חכמים אצל רבי חנינא בן דוסא לבקש עליו רחמים. כיון שראה אותם עלה לעלייה ובקש עליו רחמים. בירידתו, אמר להם : לכו - שחלצתו חמה. אמרו לו : וכי נביא אתה? אמר להן : לא נביא אנכי ולא בן נביא אנכי, אלא כך מקובלני : אם שגורה תפלתי בפי - יודע אני שהוא מקובל, ואם לאו - יודע אני שהוא מטורף.</p>
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