

Ask The Rabbi – August 10 2021

Question:

In light of your request for "Ask the Rabbi" questions, and this might be a broad one...what's your perspective on believers' political involvement, as well as speaking out about issues?

I say this with this frame of reference. There is a publication which puts out the 100 fastest growing churches every year, and each pastor gives a blurb about who they are, what their approach is, their vision, etc. A number of them have said that they don't get involved in politics; in fact, they make it a point to steer far from that, but instead, just preach the gospel. This seems to reflect a duality in their approach, as it's either one or the other.

Response:

There are many aspects to this question that I will attempt to answer for this dynamic of “church and state” is not monolithic for the Gospel has always been impacted by “politics” We are told, if you want to make friends don't mix religion and politics. Yet, religion and politics don't go great together like chocolate and peanut butter of a Reece's Peanut Butter Cup, but they are forever intertwined whether we like it or not. The last two years have just further amplified this reality. However, just because they are intertwined does not mean we, in the body of Messiah must focus all but know there is a time when we should not be silent. More on that later.

Yeshua was considered a threat to the religious leaders, the Cohen Ha Gadol and the Sanhedrin, the body of elders that were in essence the political establishment for one must remember that for lack of any other terms, there was no difference between synagogue and state because they were echad. They were one entity for the religious leaders were the government of Y'hudah.

We see this established through Moshe when Yitro came to him and saw just how taxed he was in leading the people.

Exo 18:13 The following day Moshe sat to settle disputes for the people, while the people stood around Moshe from morning till evening.

Exo 18:14 When Moshe's father-in-law saw all that he was doing to the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing to the people? Why do you sit there alone, with all the people standing around you from morning till evening?"

Exo 18:15 Moshe answered his father-in-law, "It's because the people come to me seeking God's guidance.

Exo 18:16 Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me; I judge between one person and another, and I explain to them God's laws and teachings. "

Moshe was actually a “governor of one” in that he did decided the outcome of the people according to the laws of Adonai as one. In other words Moshe was the government of the Jewish people as outlined by Adonai. Yet, what Yitro saw disturbed him. As a leader himself, of Midyan Yitro would convey the following to Moshe...

Exo 18:17 Moshe's father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing isn't good.

Exo 18:18 You will certainly wear yourself out—and not only yourself, but these people here with you as well. It's too much for you—you can't do it alone, by yourself.

Exo 18:19 So listen now to what I have to say. I will give you some advice, and God will be with you. You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases to God.

Exo 18:20 You should also teach them the laws and the teachings, and show them how to live their lives and what work they should do.

Exo 18:21 But you should choose from among all the people competent men who are God-fearing, honest and incorruptible to be their leaders, in charge of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.

Exo 18:22 Normally, they will settle the people's disputes. They should bring you the difficult cases; but ordinary matters they should decide themselves. In this way, they will make it easier for you and share the load with you.

Exo 18:23 If you do this—and God is directing you to do it—you will be able to endure; and all these people too will arrive at their destination peacefully."

Exo 18:24 Moshe paid attention to his father-in-law's counsel and did everything he said.

And thus you have the origin and foundation of what in Yeshua's time will be known as the Sanhedrin. A body not elected by the people but derived from the Liv'im, the same tribe as Moshe, for in addition to their duties in the Mishkahn and later the Temple...

Num 1:47 But those who were L'vi'im, according to the clan of their fathers, were not counted in this census;

Num 1:48 because Adonai had told Moshe,

Num 1:49 "Do not include the clan of Levi when you take the census of the people of Isra'el.

Num 1:50 Instead, give the L'vi'im charge over the tabernacle of the testimony, its equipment and everything else connected with it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its equipment, serve in it and set up their camp around it.

Num 1:51 When the tabernacle is to be moved onward, it is the L'vi'im who are to take it down and set it up in the new location; anyone else who involves himself is to be put to death.

...they were also tasked by Adonai to judge on certain matters involving the people.

Deu 17:8 "If a case comes before you at your city gate which is too difficult for you to judge, concerning bloodshed, civil suit, personal injury or any other controversial issue; you are to get up, go to the place which Adonai your God will choose,

Deu 17:9 and appear before the cohanim, who are L'vi'im, and the judge in office at the time. Seek their opinion, and they will render a verdict for you.

Deu 17:10 You will then act according to what they have told you there in that place which Adonai will choose; you are to take care to act according to all their instructions.

Deu 17:11 In accordance with the Torah they teach you, you are to carry out the judgment they render, not turning aside to the right or the left from the verdict they declare to you.

Deu 17:12 Anyone presumptuous enough not to pay attention to the cohen appointed there to serve Adonai your God or to the judge—that person must die. Thus you will exterminate such wickedness from Isra'el—

Deu 17:13 all the people will hear about it and be afraid to continue acting presumptuously.

Thus, at the time of Yeshua, the government or that of "politics" could not be separated from one another because they were bound together through Torah, Y'hudah's constitution as given by Adonai. Thus, at the time of Yeshua we see convergences both within the framework of the national life of Yisra'el and that of the framework as subjects of the Roman empire.

Yeshua is confronted many times by the religious leaders pertaining to what they deemed to His teachings

being a threat to their authority.

Mat 12:1 One Shabbat during that time, Yeshua was walking through some wheat fields. His talmidim were hungry, so they began picking heads of grain and eating them.

Mat 12:2 On seeing this, the P'rushim said to him, "Look! Your talmidim are violating Shabbat!"

Mat 12:3 But he said to them, "Haven't you ever read what David did when he and those with him were hungry?"

Mat 12:4 He entered the House of God and ate the Bread of the Presence!"—which was prohibited, both to him and to his companions;—it is permitted only to the cohanim.

Mat 12:5 "Or haven't you read in the Torah that on Shabbat the cohanim profane Shabbat and yet are blameless?"

Mat 12:6 I tell you, there is in this place something greater than the Temple!

Mat 12:7 If you knew what 'I want compassion rather than animal-sacrifice' meant, you would not condemn the innocent.

Mat 12:8 For the Son of Man is Lord of Shabbat!"

The P'rushim questioned his authority and thus the actions of His talmidim.

On another occasion, they questioned His authority to heal on Shabbat and thus were threatened by the testimony it would exhibit towards the people of the nation...

Mat 12:9 Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue.

Mat 12:10 A man there had a shriveled hand. Looking for a reason to accuse him of something, they asked him, "Is healing permitted on Shabbat?"

Mat 12:11 But he answered, "If you have a sheep that falls in a pit on Shabbat, which of you won't take hold of it and lift it out?"

Mat 12:12 How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore, what is permitted on Shabbat is to do good."

Mat 12:13 Then to the man he said, "Hold out your hand." As he held it out, it became restored, as sound as the other one.

Mat 12:14 But the P'rushim went out and began plotting how they might do away with Yeshua.

Thus Yeshua was a threat to the status quo of the Sanhedrin. These are but two examples of many whereby Yeshua would be watched, questioned and challenged by the religious leaders.

Yeshua would also be confronted by the authority of Roman rule, moreso through the influence of the Sanhedrin for Yeshua was deemed to be a "Jewish issue"

Mat 27:11 Meanwhile, Yeshua was brought before the governor, and the governor put this question to him: "Are you the King of the Jews?" Yeshua answered, "The words are yours."

Mat 27:12 But when he was accused by the head cohanim and elders, he gave no answer.

Mat 27:13 Then Pilate said to him, "Don't you hear all these charges they are making against you?"

Mat 27:14 But to the governor's great amazement, he did not say a single word in reply to the accusations.

Mat 27:15 It was the governor's custom during a festival to set free one prisoner, whomever the crowd asked for.

Mat 27:16 There was at that time a notorious prisoner being held, named Yeshua Bar-Abba.

Mat 27:17 So when a crowd had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to set free for you? Bar-Abba? or Yeshua, called 'the Messiah'?"

Mat 27:18 For he understood that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.

Mat 27:19 While he was sitting in court, his wife sent him a message, "Leave that innocent man alone. Today in a dream I suffered terribly because of him."

Mat 27:20 But the head cohanim persuaded the crowd to ask for Bar-Abba's release and to have Yeshua executed on the stake.

Mat 27:21 "Which of the two do you want me to set free for you?" asked the governor. "Bar-Abba!" they answered.

Mat 27:22 Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Yeshua, called 'the Messiah'?" They all said, "Put him to death on the stake! Put him to death on the stake!"

Mat 27:23 When he asked, "Why? What crime has he committed?" they shouted all the louder, "Put him to death on the stake!"

Mat 27:24 When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "My hands are clean of this man's blood; it's your responsibility."

Thus, Rome absolved themselves of any decision but would enact the punishment for the people of Y'hudah.

Yeshua's talmidim would be challenged by the very religious leaders Yeshua confronted, taking up His mantle in proclaiming the Good News.

Act 5:17 But the cohen hagadol and his associates, who were members of the party of the Tz'dukim, were filled with jealousy.

Act 5:18 They arrested the emissaries and put them in the public jail.

Act 5:19 But during the night, an angel of Adonai opened the doors of the prison, led them out and said,

Act 5:20 "Go, stand in the Temple court and keep telling the people all about this new life!"

Act 5:21 After hearing that, they entered the Temple area about dawn and began to teach. Now the cohen hagadol and his associates came and called a meeting of the Sanhedrin (that is, of Isra'el's whole assembly of elders) and sent to the jail to have them brought.

Act 5:22 But the officers who went did not find them in the prison. So they returned and reported,

Act 5:23 "We found the jail securely locked and the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened it, we found no one inside!"

Act 5:24 When the captain of the Temple police and the head cohanim heard these things, they were puzzled and wondered what would happen next.

Act 5:25 Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen! The men you ordered put in prison are standing in the Temple court, teaching the people!"

Act 5:26 The captain and his officers went and brought them, but not with force; because they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

Act 5:27 They conducted them to the Sanhedrin, where the cohen hagadol demanded of them,

Act 5:28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name! Look here! you have filled Yerushalayim with your teaching; moreover, you are determined to make us responsible for this man's death!"

The "Government" gave them a cease and desist order to stop all future promotion of Yeshua's message to the people. Yet in a matter of civil disobedience, Kefa spoke directly to those in power..

Act 5:29 Kefa and the other emissaries answered, "We must obey God, not men.

Act 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Yeshua, whereas you men killed him by having him hanged on a stake.

Act 5:31 God has exalted this man at his right hand as Ruler and Savior, in order to enable Isra'el to do t'shuvah and have her sins forgiven.

Act 5:32 We are witnesses to these things; so is the Ruach HaKodesh, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Act 5:33 On hearing this, the members of the Sanhedrin were infuriated and wanted to put the emissaries to death.

The "Government" in all their power could have incarcerated them further. Yet, one of the officials of the Sanhedrin spoke...

Act 5:34 But one of the members of the Sanhedrin rose to his feet, a Parush named Gamli'el, a teacher of the Torah highly respected by all the people. He ordered the men put outside for a little while

Act 5:35 and then addressed the court: "Men of Isra'el, take care what you do to these people.

Act 5:36 Some time ago, there was a rebellion under Todah, who claimed to be somebody special; and a number of men, maybe four hundred, rallied behind him. But upon his being put to death, his whole following was broken up and came to nothing.

Act 5:37 After this, Y'hudah HaG'lili led another uprising, back at the time of the enrollment for the Roman tax; and he got some people to defect to him. But he was killed, and all his followers were scattered.

Act 5:38 So in the present case, my advice to you is not to interfere with these people, but to leave them alone. For if this idea or this movement has a human origin, it will collapse.

Act 5:39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them; you might even find yourselves fighting God!" They heeded his advice.

Thus, the "Government" took a step back from their stark position and would in essence monitor rather than incarcerate.

Sha'ul a one time insider of the Sanhedrin would overcome his bias against Yeshua and would ultimately become persecuted himself. He would cause such upheaval throughout the Roman empire starting in Yerushalem...

Act 23:1 Sha'ul looked straight at them and said, "Brothers, I have been discharging my obligations to God with a perfectly clear conscience, right up until today."

Act 23:2 But the cohen hagadol, Hananyah, ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth.

Act 23:3 Then Sha'ul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Will you sit there judging me according to the Torah, yet in violation of the Torah order me to be struck?"

Act 23:4 The men nearby said, "This is the cohen hagadol of God that you're insulting!"

Act 23:5 Sha'ul said, "I didn't know, brothers, that he was the cohen hagadol; for it says in the Torah, 'You are not to speak disparagingly of a ruler of your people.' "

Act 23:6 But knowing that one part of the Sanhedrin consisted of Tz'dukim and the other of P'rushim, Sha'ul shouted, "Brothers, I myself am a Parush and the son of P'rushim; and it is concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead that I am being tried!"

That involved a “government” sanctioned assassination:

Act 23:12 The next day, some of the Judeans formed a conspiracy. They took an oath, saying they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Sha'ul;

Act 23:13 more than forty were involved in this plot.

Act 23:14 They went to the head cohanim and the elders and said, "We have bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food until we have killed Sha'ul.

Thus the intervention of Rome and thus taking authority over the matter for Sha'ul was a citizen of Rome...

Act 23:25 And the commander wrote the following letter:

Act 23:26 From: Claudius Lysias To: His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings!

Act 23:27 This man was seized by the Judeans and was about to be killed by them, when I came on the scene with my troops and rescued him. After learning that he was a Roman citizen,

Act 23:28 I wanted to understand exactly what they were charging him with; so I brought him down to their "Sanhedrin."

Act 23:29 I found that he was charged in connection with questions of their "Torah" but that there was no charge deserving death or prison.

Act 23:30 But when I was informed of a plot against the man, I immediately sent him to you and also ordered his accusers to state their case against him before you.

Act 23:31 So the soldiers, following their orders, took Sha'ul during the night and brought him to Antipatris,

Act 23:32 then returned to the barracks after leaving the cavalry to go on with him.

Act 23:33 The cavalry took him to Caesarea, delivered the letter to the governor, and handed Sha'ul over to him.

that he would eventually be arrested, sent to Italy

Act 27:1 Once it had been decided that we should set sail for Italy, they handed Sha'ul and some other prisoners over to an officer of the Emperor's Regiment named Julius.

placed under house arrest, awaiting trial, yet not missing an opportunity to proclaim the Good News about Yeshua...

Act 28:17 After three days Sha'ul called a meeting of the local Jewish leaders. When they had gathered, he said to them: "Brothers, although I have done nothing against either our people or the traditions of our fathers, I was made a prisoner in Yerushalayim and handed over to the Romans.

Act 28:18 They examined me and were ready to release me, because I had done nothing to justify a death sentence.

Act 28:19 But when the Judeans objected, I was forced to appeal to the Emperor—not that I had any charge to make against my own people.

Act 28:20 This is why I have asked to see you and speak with you, for it is because of the hope of Isra'el that I have this chain around me."

Act 28:21 They said to him, "We have not received any letters about you from Y'hudah, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you.

Act 28:22 But we do think it would be appropriate to hear your views from you, yourself; for all we know about this sect is that people everywhere speak against it."

Act 28:23 So they arranged a day with him and came to his quarters in large numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, giving a thorough witness about the Kingdom of God and making use of both the Torah of Moshe and the Prophets to persuade them about Yeshua.

Act 28:24 Some were convinced by what he said,

Act 28:25 while others refused to believe. So they left, disagreeing among themselves, after Sha'ul had made one final statement: "The Ruach HaKodesh spoke well in saying to your fathers through Yesha`yahu the prophet,

Act 28:26 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing but never understand, and you will keep on seeing but never perceive,

Act 28:27 because the heart of this people has grown thick—with their ears they barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, for fear that they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and do t'shuvah, so that I could heal them." '

Act 28:28 Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Goyim, and they will listen!"

Act 28:29 *[After he had said this, the Jews left, arguing vehemently among themselves.]*

Act 28:30 Sha'ul remained two whole years in a place he rented for himself; and he continued receiving all who came to see him,

Act 28:31 openly and without hindrance proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.

We have seen those impacted, specifically in the book of Acts by those in “political authority” for the Gospel was considered a threat to the status quo of the Sanhedrin.

In these examples we see a convergence of “synagogue and state” “God and government” to where the interests of both intersect to where the interests of both are challenged.

Thus it is when there is a convergence of the two and whereby the Word of God is impeded, obstructed and thus the people of God become violated by government overreach that we are not to be silent. For, when Yeshua was confronted in a matter that was government related, this is how He responded...

Mar 12:13 Next they sent some P'rushim and some members of Herod's party to him in order to trap him with a sh'eilah.

Mar 12:14 They came and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you tell the truth and are not concerned with what people think about you, since you pay no attention to a person's status but really teach what God's way is. Does Torah say that taxes are to be paid to the Roman Emperor, or not?"

Mar 12:15 But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you trying to trap me? Bring me a denarius so I can look at it."

Mar 12:16 They brought one; and he asked them, "Whose name and picture are these?" "The Emperor's," they replied.

Mar 12:17 Yeshua said, "Give the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor. And give to God what belongs to

God!" And they were amazed at him.

Give to the Emperor what belongs to him and Give to God what belongs to Him. Thus, when a matter is government related and does not challenge the Word of God, it is not a matter that should concern us directly, though we may be impacted by it as a citizen of this country, it has no bearing upon us as a citizen of the Kingdom.

However, if a matter pertaining to Adonai is violated by the Government, then we should stand for what Adonai stands for. That is when the laws of man violate the laws of God we must speak in the manner Kefa and Sha'ul spoke.

In 2012 we as a small congregation, had established a position against the ballot question of same sex marriage, for Maine was one of only four states to have such an initiative on the ballot prior to it becoming the law of the land in 2015. For marriage comes from God and thus is defined by God. Though it has become a legal institution it is not open for interpretation. We are a congregation that supports the rights of the unborn for Adonai is the giver of life. We are a congregation that speaks out against all acts of Anti-semitism for it is the vision of this congregation to be a light to the Jewish people for the purpose of revealing Messiah.

The first time I heard this was when I was under Rabbi Frank but I know it did not originate from him - "If you stand for nothing, you fall for everything"

Thus, there is a time when we as a congregation are to stand up and speak out against government intrusion pertaining to that which Adonai has afforded us.

Upon Stephen's powerful testimony he gave to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7, defending the false allegations brought against him, that he spoke blasphemously against God and Moshe...

Act 7:54 On hearing these things, they were cut to their hearts and ground their teeth at him.

Act 7:55 But he, full of the Ruach HaKodesh, looked up to heaven and saw God's Sh'khinah, with Yeshua standing at the right hand of God.

Act 7:56 "Look!" he exclaimed, "I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

If we stand for Adonai, He will stand for us.

1st Amendment:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Government in many ways and at many times has breached the authority and sovereignty of Adonai.

There is an appropriate time to stand. Know what is of Adonai and know what is of the Emperor (Caesar)

<https://thefederalist.com/2021/06/04/why-woke-christianity-is-the-greatest-threat-to-christians-today/>