

March 8, 2012

Weekly Yeshiva: The Proper Use of Political Influence

As we celebrate the deliverance which our people experienced because of the courage of Esther and the wisdom of Mordecai, we need to understand first that at every juncture of our lives, we will come **to such a time as this** repeatedly (I Cor. 10:13 Pr. 3:5,6) and secondly that in all circumstances, we are called to be **good influences** (Matt 5:13-16 and I P. 3:15) who shine in the dark and who represent the kind of **spiritual moral reaction** which our faith requires (I John 2:15, 16 and I Peter 3:16, 17). This is especially true as we come to understand the proper use of political influence.

In this study we will distinguish between three kinds of scenarios: (1) when we are talking about a believing context (as in the kingdom period), (2) when we are talking about a friendly non believing context and finally (3) when we under persecution and have to protect ourselves from harm.

(1) Moses set up judges who heard cases involving disputes between people (Ex. 18:25, 26) and there are numerous cases of prophets or even common people petitioning leaders (kings and judges) to be heard and to influence their decisions. Good and bad leadership exists in a believing context and we need to exercise our right to benefit from good leadership and learn how to survive bad leadership. Prov. 21:1-3 outlines our need to see the control of the L-rd even in situations which are beyond our control. Our job is to remain under His control in all circumstances.

(2) Joseph ruled in Egypt when it was a friendly non-believing context (Gen. 41:15, 16) and Daniel also exercised leadership at a time when the Babylonian Empire was not hostile to the Jewish community which lived among it in captivity (Dan. 2:12-23; 46-49), despite the incident where the three Hebrew children refused to bow down before the golden statue and Daniel refused to pray to Darius.

When we are in a situation where the laws are not based on G-d's laws, we obey them as long as they do not contravene G-d's laws and explain the reason we are unable to comply to others.

(3) Esther lived in a period of time where laws were passed which threatened her people and her story is one of intrigue and resistance to ensure that her people were not annihilated. Under the Maccabees, armed revolt was needed against forced assimilation, but the rebellions against the Babylonians just before the destruction of the temple and the rebellions against Romans in 67-70 AD and 130-132 AD were disasters for the Jewish people.

Romans 13:1-7 outlines the purpose of government and Matt. 10:16 speaks to our need to be both wise and harmless in our dealings with people, believing or otherwise

The proper use of political influence must adhere to at least **three principles**. First of all, **none of the commandments of G-d must be broken, even when we are obliged to break the commandments of men**. Second of all we must not use our political influence for our personal gain to the detriment of the rights of either the poor or the rich (Ex. 23:1-9). Third, we must be sure to not to use political influence to further a personal agenda for which we would like to claim divine sanction (like slavery, prohibition or any number of issues for which believers can take opposite positions and both be right and both be wrong, as in the case of the Manifest Destiny Doctrine).