

## Famous ★ FIGURES

### Hillel and Shammai

Two of the most famous Pharisees were Hillel and Shammai, both of whom lived during the time of Herod the Great. Hillel and Shammai were both revered teachers but they often differed in their interpretations of the Torah. The following Talmudic story highlights differences in the temperaments of these two famous teachers.

One day, a non-Jew came before Shammai and said, "I will convert to Judaism if you teach me the whole Torah while standing on one foot." Shammai responded by chasing the man away with a stick. The man then went before Hillel and repeated his challenge. Hillel responded, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others. That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary. Now go and study [Torah]."

Whose response do you think was more appropriate? Why?

---

---

Describe one way you can apply Hillel's teaching in your everyday life.

---

---



*How can greeting others with a smile rather than a frown be a way to follow Hillel's teaching?*

his family, suspecting they were plotting against him. He executed many popular figures—including his wife, the Hasmonean princess Miriamne. Fearing attempts on his throne and life, Herod built massive fortresses where he could escape in case of rebellion. The most famous fortress was Masada.

### Challenging the Romans

Herod succeeded in stifling opposition because the people feared him. But soon after he died, in 4 BCE, farmers rose up in protest. Many had been forced off their farms because they could not pay their taxes. Now some became Robin Hood-style bandits, stealing weapons, looting royal palaces, robbing travelers, and even attacking Roman soldiers.

The Romans soon took direct control of Judea and clamped down on the bandits. (The Galilee and Golan remained under the control of Herod's sons.) The Roman Senate appointed special commissioners, called procurators, to tend to military, judicial, and civil matters. The High Priest controlled religious affairs and other local matters. The Romans auctioned off the office of High Priest to the highest bidder, who was usually a Sadducee. Many poorer people resented the close relationship between the Sadducees and the Romans, so they turned to the Pharisees as their religious and political leaders.

But even the Pharisees were not fully united on the issue of Roman control of Judea. Some were violently opposed to Roman rule. In 6 CE, a Pharisee named Zadok and a popular community leader named Judah the Galilean led a tax revolt against the Romans. Others did not openly oppose the Romans; instead, they prayed to God to send a savior.

### Praying for the Messiah

In these troubled times, many Jews turned to God for relief. Some believed that God would send a messiah to destroy their enemies and rule them as in the days of old. So they prayed for the coming of the Messiah, for the "End of Days"—the end of their suffering and the start of a more perfect world.

The Hebrew word for messiah, *mashiah*, means "anointed one." In biblical times, kings were anointed with oil. Thus, many people expected the Messiah to be a flesh-and-blood king.



The Golden Gate is located at the south wall of the Temple District of Jerusalem. According to tradition, the Messiah will enter the city through this gate. In 1541 CE, the arches were sealed by the Muslim ruler, Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I, to prevent the Messiah from entering.