

**Hillel, Shammai and when Disagreements Become Deadly**  
**Sources from 9AdarProject of Pardes Institute**

**Shulchan Aruch, Laws of Fasts (580) (Rabbi Yosef Karo, 1488–1575, Spain/Land of Israel)** These are the days that tragedies befell our forefathers, and it is worthy to fast on them.... On the 9th (of Adar) Beit Shammai and Hillel disagreed

\*The commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch disagreed over what was the nature of the disagreement between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel that day that would merit a fast day.

**The lovely explanation:**

**Levush, Orach Chayim, 580 (R. Mordechai Yaffe, 1530-1612, Poland)**

On the ninth [of Adar], Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagreed with one another, and since a machloket [disagreement] fell between the scholars of Israel, even though their disagreement was for the sake of heaven, nevertheless the Torah had become, G-d forbid, as if it was two Torahs, this one forbids and this one permits, this one declares a matter impure, and the other declares it pure, and no law is known completely. Behold this is like a tragic day and we fast on it.

**The yucky explanation:**

**Mishnah Shabbat 1:4**

And these are some of the regulations enacted in the attic of Hananiah b. Hezekiyah b. Gorion, when the rabbis came to visit him. They did a roll call and found that the disciples of Shammai were more numerous than those of Hillel, and they enforced eighteen regulations on that day

**The darker explanation:**

**Eliyahu Rabba, Orach Chayim 580:7 (Rabbi Eliyahu Shapiro (1660-1712, Prague)**

On the (9th) of Adar they disagreed: And three thousand of the students died.

**Babylonian Talmud, 17a**

They (Beit Shammai) thrust a sword into the study house and declared: "Whoever wants to enter may enter, but no one may leave!" And on that day Hillel sat in submission before Shammai, like one of the disciples, and it was as wretched for Israel as the day on which the [golden] calf was made.

**Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 1:4 (3c)**

That day was as wretched for Israel as the day on which the [golden] calf was made. It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua Oniya: The students of Beit Shammai stood below them and began to slaughter the students of Beit Hillel. It was taught: Six of them ascended and the others stood over them with swords and lances. Rav Avoon, Rav Judah in the name of Shmual: We read 'The eighteen (decrees) even a greater (Bet Din) cannot abrogate, because they were ready to give their lives for them.

### **Korban Edah, Jerusalem Talmud 1:4**

Rabbi David ben Naftali Hirsch Frankel (1707–1762, Berlin) “And they began to slaughter the students of Beit Hillel” – Only if they (Beit Hillel) wanted to go up [to vote], however G-d forbid, they did not [actually] kill anyone, so it seems to me.

### **Putting It Into Context**

#### **H. Graetz, History of the Jews Volume ii, chapter 9 1872),**

[Graetz dated the events to roughly the year 66CE, on the eve of the Great Revolt]. To cut off every link between them (Jews and non-Jews), the followers of the School of Shammai proposed erecting a barrier which should effectively prevent any communication, by prohibiting the Judeans in future from buying wine, oil, bread, or any other articles of food from their heathen neighbors. These regulations were known under the name of “The Eighteen Things.” Religious fervor and political zealotry, in those stormy times, always accompanied each other. The Hillelites, more moderate in their religious and political views, could not agree to such sharply defined exclusiveness, but when the Synod was called together to decide upon the laws before mentioned, the Zealots proved all-powerful. Eleazar ben Ananias, probably the leader of the Zealots, who was himself a teacher of the Law, invited the disciples of both schools to meet in his house. Armed soldiers were placed at the door and were directed to allow everyone to enter but no one to go out, and during the fiery discussions that were carried out there, many of the school of Hillel are said to have been killed. On account of these decrees of the school of Shammai were brought forward and agreed to, the 9th of Adar, was regarded as a day of misfortune.

#### **Isaac Hirsch Weiss, Dor Dor VeDorshav I 1871**

The timing of these events was in the generation before the destruction (of the Temple), at a time that they no longer related to one another in peace and brotherhood, as it had been in the beginning. For in the beginning of the formation of the houses (of Hillel and Shammai), they treated each other in peace and friendship, and after some time their opinions became divided also in regards to their attitudes towards to government (of Rome). Beit Shammai were opposed to the government and their hand was with the zealots, and Beit Hillel held themselves from rebelling and succumbed to the Romans. And the disagreement over this brought forth enmity between them, and this enmity spread and also their disagreements over the law.