

“If not now, when?” Who was Hillel the Elder?

... and what does he have to do with the goals of JCAD (American Friends of the Jerusalem Center for Artistic Development)?

Hillel the Elder, born in Babylon, in 110 BCE, lived in Jerusalem during the time of King Herod and the Roman Emperor Augustus. Both Hillel and Moses lived 120 years!! Unlike Moses, at the age of forty, Hillel went to the Land of Israel; forty years he spent in study; and the last third of his life he was the spiritual head of the Jewish people. His activity of forty years likely covered the period of 30 BCE to 10 CE, when he died.

Hillel the Elder contributed to a famous treatise called the Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot).

The book was a compilation of famous rabbis' wisdom for mankind to aspire to the highest level of ethical and moral behavior. Hillel is credited with the following thought-provoking questions, which have been passed down for more than 2,000 years:

“If I am not for myself, who is for me?” Hillel tells us that we must love ourselves enough to be “for” ourselves, since there is no one else who would or could do this on our behalf.

“And when I am only for myself, what am I?” We should not be tempted to be self-absorbed and forget about the Almighty and our fellow man.

“And if not now, when?” We need to get going and soar like birds and take leaps of faith!

All you have to do is take a walk on the stone streets of Jerusalem and read the street signs, the door posts; see the

indentations in the doorways where ancient Mazzuzot were affixed; gaze at the rooftops in certain sections of town, and walk down the narrow alleyways where only a donkey and a cart can still pass. Today you will see young people with their Smart Phones and cellphones; you will see wine glasses and hear the laughter of crowds on a warm summer evening; or see a mound of snow caressing a stone wall that is a thousands years old; or walk into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and smell the incense; step out onto a wide piazza and buy fresh-baked pita or laffa bread spread thick with chummous.

- The stones upon which Jesus walked and preached during the Second Temple period (538 BCE- 70 AD) are located on an enormous mount, now called the Temple Mount.
- The stones upon which Avraham offered Itzhak to God, (an area called Mount Moriah in the Bible), are on the Temple Mount.
- The stones where The Holy of Holies is buried are under the Temple Mount!
- The stones leading to King David's tomb are in Jerusalem and close to the Temple Mount.
- And the City of David, where King David's palace is under excavation is in Jerusalem, close to the Temple Mount!
- The remains of The First Temple and The Second Temple are in Jerusalem, under the Temple Mount.
- The retaining wall of the First and Second Temple is part of the foundation of the Temple Mount.
- And cisterns, sarcophagi, tunnels, pottery, coins, artifacts, jewelry, human and animal remains from thousands of years ago are in Jerusalem!

If you have a story to tell, "If not now, when?" is what you might ask yourself. Walking amongst the stones of the Bible may inspire you. A character in the Bible might inspire you to tell a modern parable; think up an action/adventure story; come up with a political intrigue or drama or love story.

It's all under your feet. Those stones all tell a story.
It's time!!