

Shemoneh Esreh Revisited – Birkat Ha-Minim in Jewish and Christian Sources

עיון בברכת המינים – מקורותיה ותוצאותיה

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1) Origins?

A1) Tosefta, <i>Berachot</i> 3.25 (mid-late 3 rd century CE)	
שמונה עשרה ברכות שאמרו חכמים כנגד שמונה עשרה אזכרות שבהבו לה' בני אלים כולל של מינים בשל פרושין ושל גרים בשל זקנים ושל דוד בבונה ירושלים. אם אמר אלו לעצמן ואילו לעצמן יצא	The eighteen blessings that the sages said correspond to the eighteen mentions of God's name in [Psalm 29]. One includes the [benediction] of the <i>minim</i> in the benediction of the separatists, and that of the converts in that of the elders, and that of David in that of the Builder of Jerusalem. If one recited each one individually one has discharged one's obligation.
A2) Mishnah, <i>Berachot</i> 4.3 (early 3 rd century CE)	
רבן גמליאל אומר בכל יום מתפלל אדם שמונה עשרה רבי יהושע אומר מעין שמונה עשרה ר' עקיבא אומר אם שגורה תפלתו בפיו יתפלל שמונה עשרה ואם לאו מעין י"ח	Rabban Gamaliel says: Every day a person must pray eighteen [benedictions of the 'Amidah]. Rabbi Yehoshua says: One may recite an abbreviated [form of the] eighteen [benedictions]. Rabbi Akiva says: If his prayer is fluent in his mouth, he must pray eighteen, but if not, then an abbreviated eighteen.
B1) Bavli, <i>Berachot</i> 28b-29a (c. 6 th - 7 th centuries CE)	
תנו רבנן: שמעון הפקולי הסדיר שמונה עשרה ברכות לפני רבן גמליאל על הסדר ביבנה. אמר להם רבן גמליאל לחכמים: כלום יש אדם שיודע לתקן ברכת המינים? עמד שמואל הקטן ותקנה, לשנה אחרת שכחה והשקיף בה שתיים ושלוש שעות ולא העלוהו	Our rabbis taught: Shimon Ha-Pakuli arranged the eighteen benedictions in order in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel at Yavneh. Rabban Gamaliel said to the Sages: Is there anyone who knows how to fix (לתקן) benediction of the <i>minim</i> ? Shmuel Ha-Katan arose and fixed it. Another year, he forgot it, and scrutinized it for two or three hours, but they did not remove him [as prayer leader].
B2) Yerushalmi, <i>Yevamot</i> 1.6 (ca. late 4 th – early 5 th century CE)	
תני יצאתה בת קול ואמרה אילו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הם אבל הלכה כבית הלל לעולם. באיכן יצאת בת קול. רב ביבי בשם רבי יוחנן אמר ביבנה יצאת בת קול	It was taught: a heavenly voice emerged and said: Both these and these are the words of the living God, but the law is forever in accordance with the House of Hillel. Where did the heavenly voice emerge? R. Bibi said in the name of R. Yohanan: the heavenly voice emerged at Yavneh.

2) Text

Tosefta, <i>Berachot</i> 3.25 (mid-late 3 rd century CE)	
שמונה עשרה ברכות שאמרו חכמים כנגד שמונה עשרה אזכרות שבהבו לה' בני אלים כולל של מינים בשל פרושין ושל גרים בשל זקנים ושל דוד בבונה ירושלים. אם אמר אלו לעצמן ואילו לעצמן יצא	The eighteen blessings that the sages said correspond to the eighteen mentions of God's name in [Psalm 29]. One includes the [benediction] of the <i>minim</i> in the benediction of the separatists, and that of the converts in that of the elders, and that of David in that of the Builder of Jerusalem. If one recited each one individually one has discharged one's obligation.
Yerushalmi, <i>Berachot</i> 4.3, 8a (ca. late 4 th – early 5 th century CE)	
והתני כולל של מינים ושל פושעים במכניע זידים	But was it not taught: one includes the [benediction] of the <i>minim</i> and that of the sinners in, "Who humbled the insolent"?
Bavli, <i>Megillah</i> 17b	
ומה ראו לומר קיבוץ גלויות לאחר ברכת השנים? דכתיב... וכיון שנתקבצו גלויות,	And why did they recite [the benediction of] the ingathering of the exiles after the benediction of years? For it is written...

נעשה דין ברשעים, שנאמר... וכיון שנעשה דין מן הרשעים, כלו המינים, וכולל זדים עמהם, שנאמר... וכיון שכלו המינים, מתרוממת קרן צדיקים, דכתיב...	And once the exiles have been gathered, judgment shall be exacted from the wicked, as it is said... And once judgment has been exacted from the wicked, the <i>minim</i> will be destroyed – and one includes the insolent with them – as it is said... And once the <i>minim</i> have been destroyed, the strength of the righteous will be exalted, as it is written...
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3) Impact – Later Perspectives

Tanhuma, <i>Vayikra</i> 2 (5 th century, with additions and reformulations until early 9 th c. CE)	
העובר לפני התבה וטעה [ולא אמר ברכת קללת המינים, מהו שמחזירין אותו, כך שנו רבותינו העובר לפני התבה וטעה] בכל הברכות כולן אין מחזירין אותו, בברכת המינים מחזירין אותו בעל כרחו, חיישינן שמא מין הוא, ולכך מחזירין אותו שאם יהיה בו צד מינות יהיה מקלל את עצמו והקהל עונין אמן	One who passes before the ark and errs, and does not recite the curse of the <i>minim</i> , what is the law concerning making him repeat? Thus our rabbis taught: one who passes before the ark and erred in any of the benedictions, they do not make him repeat, but in the case of the benediction of the <i>minim</i> they make him repeat [even] against his will. We are concerned that perhaps he is a <i>min</i> ; therefore they force him to repeat, for if he has an element of <i>minut</i> he will end up cursing himself, and the congregation will recite after him, “Amen.”

4) Jesus-Followers and Christianity

A) John 9.22 (c. 95 CE)		
His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone will confess Jesus to be Christ, he will be put out of the synagogue (ἀποσυνάγωγος).		
B) Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> 93 (c. 156-167 CE)	C) Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> 96	D) Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> 137
But you were never shown to be possessed of friendship or love either towards God, or towards the prophets, or towards yourselves, but, as is evident, you are ever found to be idolaters and murderers of righteous men, so that you laid hands even on Christ Himself; and to this very day you abide in your wickedness, execrating those who prove that this man who was crucified by you is the Christ.	For you curse in your synagogues all those who are called from Him Christians	Assent, therefore, and pour no ridicule on the Son of God; obey not the Pharisaic teachers, and scoff not at the King of Israel, as the rulers of your synagogues teach you to do after your prayers
E) Epiphanius (c. 315-403 CE), <i>Panarion</i> 29.9		
Yet these are very much the Jews' enemies. Not only do Jewish people have a hatred of them; they even stand up at dawn, at midday, and toward evening, three times a day when they recite their prayers in the synagogues, and curse and anathematize them. Three times a day they say, “God curse the Nazoraeans.” For they harbor an extra grudge against them, if you please, because despite their Jewishness, they preach that Jesus is “the Christ—the opposite of those who are still Jews, for they have not accepted Jesus.		
F) Jerome, <i>Epistle to Augustine</i> 4.13 (404 CE)		
What shall I say of the Ebionites who claim to be Christians? Until now a heresy is to be found in all parts of the East where Jews have their synagogues; it is called “of the Minaeans” and cursed by the Pharisees up to now. Usually they are named Nazaraeans. They believe in Christ, the Son of God born of Mary the virgin, and they say about him that he suffered and rose again under Pontius Pilate, in whom we also believe, but since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians.		