

## The Eighteen Benedictions and the *Minim* before 70 CE

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### **Abstract**

The wording of one version of the Eighteen Benedictions, which is preserved in a Geniza fragment (T-S K27.33b), appears to assume that the Temple is still standing, in two lines which are usually not printed. Other features of this version also suggest that it preserves wording which originates from the Second Temple period. It also includes the curse of the *Minim* which is traditionally regarded as a Jabnean addition, but there is evidence that the curse had an earlier origin, and the wording of the curse is found to be a criticism of the Sadducean priesthood.<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

The Eighteen Benedictions is the title given to the central prayer which is said three times a day by all observant Jews. It is also known as the *Shemoneh Esreh* ('Eighteen'), the *Tephillah* ('Prayer') or the '*Amidah*' ('standing') because one stands to say this prayer. The section which curses the *Minim* has provoked more discussion than any other because it is linked with a curse of the *Nazûrim*, a term which is generally agreed to refer to early Christians. There is a tradition which says that this curse of the *Minim* was decreed in the time of Gamaliel II (about 80-120 CE).

The origins of the Eighteen are traditionally ascribed to the "men of the Great Synagogue" (bBer.33a) or those who preceded them as far back as Moses ("120 elders, prophets among them" - bMeg.17b, cf. mAb.1.1). Finkelstein<sup>2</sup> attempted to trace the earliest development of the Eighteen using form criticism. Some, like Grant,<sup>3</sup> embraced this enthusiastically, while others have criticised his conclusions as simplistic and over-confident.<sup>4</sup> Bickerman,<sup>5</sup> while critical of Finkelstein's methods, nevertheless found some value in his model of a gradually developing prayer which was originally based in the Temple. He argued that the first benedictions formed a 'civic prayer' on the model of Greek city states. Bickerman even

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<sup>1</sup> This is part of a larger project to identify rabbinic traditions from before 70 CE, carried out by the *Institute for Early Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World*, at Tyndale House, Cambridge. I would also like to thank Prof. William Horbury for his many valuable insights.

<sup>2</sup> Finkelstein, Louis, "Development of the Amidah" (*JQR* NS 16, 1925-6, 1-43, 127-70)

<sup>3</sup> Grant, Frederick C., "Modern study of the Jewish liturgy" (*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 65, 1953, 59-77)

<sup>4</sup> Elbogen, Ismar, *Jewish liturgy: a comprehensive history*, translated by Raymond P. Scheindlin from the German ed., 1931 and the Hebrew ed., 1972 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993) p.393; Heinemann, Joseph, *Prayer in the Talmud: forms and patterns* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1977), translation of *ha-Tefilah bi-tequfat ha-Tana'im ve-ha-'Amora'im* (Yerushalayim: Magnes Press, 1966) p.44f.

<sup>5</sup> Bickerman, Elias J, "The civic prayer for Jerusalem" (*Harvard Theological Review* 55, 1962, 163-185)

claimed that it was referred to in 1Macc.12.11 where High Priest Jonathan, at about 150-145 BCE, told the Spartans that the Jews unremittably remembered them at festivals and "at other days... at the sacrifices which we offer and in prayers".

The origins and original wording of the Eighteen is probably now impossible to reconstruct, though their form goes back before the first century, because very similar ideas and even wording is found in various ancient sources especially Ben Sira 36.1-17; 51.21-35 (Hebrew) and 2 Maccabees 1.24-29.<sup>6</sup> It is probable that there was no single official version of this prayer in the early centuries because prayers were not fixed until at least the second century,<sup>7</sup> and probably much later.<sup>8</sup> However, it is also likely that the areas where variation was permitted were carefully limited, and local versions would become popular and semi-fixed. The differences between the versions which have survived should not distract us from their very great similarities, and the identical wording in most of the final lines of each benediction. These similarities suggest that the first three benedictions and the final lines of many of the central benedictions had a relatively fixed form, while the final three were the least fixed and the order and number of the middle benedictions may have been flexible .

The search for the 'original' versions of such prayers, which were assumed to exist by scholars such as Elbogen<sup>9</sup>, has been largely abandoned. Heinemann<sup>10</sup> has shown convincingly that the Jewish liturgies contain many examples of prayers which are similar to each other, but which have been preserved in different forms even within the same liturgy. This suggests that variations were preserved by being used in different places in the same liturgy. He therefore disputed the idea that variants of the Eighteen descended from a single original form. He argued that variations were encouraged before 70 CE and that some of these became popular enough to be preserved. He also concluded that the main development of the prayer took place before 70 CE.

“Even though we have no explicit information about the existence of the ‘*Amida* of eighteen benedictions in the time of the Second Temple - as we do concerning the ‘*Amida* of seven benedictions for Sabbaths and festivals (*T.Ber.3.13* and parallels)- there can be no doubt that the nucleus of this prayer took shape as early as the Second Temple period; and it seems likely that the number of benedictions was

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<sup>6</sup> The parallels with 2Macc.1.24-29 are laid out usefully in Falk, Daniel K., *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) pp. 200f. For other possible Qumran parallels, see 1QH.16.8-20; 1QS.9-11.

<sup>7</sup> cf. mBer.4.4 "R. Eliezer [b. Hyrcanus, c. 80-120 CE] says: He who makes his prayer fixed, his prayer is not [successful] supplications" (sic.). Eliezer was a conservative voice in a changing world. He frequently wished to maintain the status quo. It is likely that prayers were becoming fixed in his time. The word 'fixed' ((בִּקֵּי) may mean a fixed time (as at mBer.4:1) or fixed words (which makes more sense here). After the wording of prayers became fixed, this ruling came to mean 'who makes his prayers perfunctory'—see Marcus Jastrow *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1985) ad loc.

<sup>8</sup> Even during the late Amoraic period, it was felt necessary to make rulings about fixing the wording of the opening formula, the concluding eulogy, and certain important phrases in the body of the benedictions (cf. bPes.117b).

<sup>9</sup> Elbogen, *Jewish liturgy*

<sup>10</sup> Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*

already eighteen, at least in the practice of most communities, before the 'formulating' of this prayer in Yavneh. This view is nearly universally accepted today.”<sup>11</sup>

The general consensus is therefore that the Eighteen originates from the Second Temple period, though we do not now have access to any version which existed before the Temple was destroyed.<sup>12</sup> The tradition that the curse of the *Minim* and possibly other changes date from the time of Gamaliel II are also generally accepted as historical. This paper will argue that the oldest of the Geniza fragments of the Eighteen contains as nearly as possible the wording before 70 CE, and that the curse of the *Minim* also dates from the time of Gamaliel I.

## **The Text of the Eighteen**

There are two main versions of the Eighteen, which come from Palestinian and Babylonian traditions. They are preserved in different forms in various prayer book manuscripts and other liturgical fragments. The oldest witness to the Babylonian version is generally agreed to be the *Seder R. Amram*, though this has to be reconstructed from several extant texts, as done admirably by Finkelstein. The oldest witness to the Palestinian version is generally agreed to be the fragmentary manuscripts which were preserved in the Cairo Geniza.

Much of this paper is based on the precise text of a Geniza fragment of the Eighteen (T-S K27.33b) which will hereafter be called Schechter's Geniza fragment after its first editor. It is reproduced here partly because it is difficult to access elsewhere, and partly because many previous editions and translations have been inaccurate. The Hebrew text is available in Schechter's original paper of 1898<sup>13</sup> but it contained errors. This text has been often reproduced, with various degrees of corrections.<sup>14</sup> The following is based on the original in Cambridge University Library.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Heinemann's comments added as an editor of Elbogen, *Jewish liturgy*, p. 37. Ezra Fleischer has recently argued against this, saying that there was no obligatory prayer in the Temple or in the synagogue during the time of the Temple, and that only the Qumran sectarians had fixed prayers before 70 CE (“On the Beginnings of Obligatory Jewish Prayer”, *Tarbiz* 59, 1990, 397-441). See also the reply by Stefan Reif, “On the Earliest Development of Jewish Prayer” (*Tarbiz* 60, 1991, 677-81).

<sup>12</sup> The term 'consensus' does not mean agreement concerning details. For a good recent discussion which dates some portions of the Eighteen to Hasmonaean times, see Flusser, David, *Entdeckungen im Neuen Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn : Neukirchener Verlag, c1987-c1999) pp.115-127.

<sup>13</sup> Schechter, Solomon, “Geniza Specimens” (*Jewish Quarterly Review* OS 10, 1898, 654-59)

<sup>14</sup> Finkelstein, “Development of the Amidah” pp. 142-170 reproduces the text very helpfully in parallel with other versions, corrected the errors, though he introduced some new ones. Elbogen corrected all the errors, and his text is most easily available in a footnote of his *Jewish liturgy*, p. 396. C.W. Dugmore usefully reproduced Elbogen's text with an English translation, alongside the Hebrew text and translation from the Singer's English Synagogue prayer book (i.e. a Babylonian version), in *The influence of the synagogue upon the divine office* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945) pp. 114-125. Other publications of the text are usefully listed in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Revised and edited by Geza Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979) II p.455 n. 154.

<sup>15</sup> T-S K27.33b in Cambridge University Library. Schechter also found two other related fragments containing benedictions of the Eighteen (K27.18) which he added as a postscript to his article, and which follow this one with a few variations which are noted in footnotes below. Three other fragments will also be

The text is compared here with the earliest Babylonian version, of Amram, as reconstructed from various sources by Finkelstein. Hebrew wording which is identical in both Schechter's Geniza fragment and Amram's is underlined, and when there are slight differences in grammatical form it is underlined with dashes. These common words give a good indication as to what the common wording of the benediction was, before it was developed by both Palestinian and Babylonian communities. Although it is always possible that one or other community removed words as well as adding them, the general trend was to add words. And although it is likely that different versions existed concurrently in both communities, before the wording became fixed, the underlined words nevertheless help to indicate which words were considered too traditional to be altered. Benedictions are numbered slightly differently in the Babylonian (B) and Palestinian (P) versions because of the insertion of an extra benediction #B15 in the Babylonian version.

P1 = B1	Geniza folio	
<u>Blessed are you Lord</u>	3a	yy ht) Kwr b
<u>our God and God of our fathers;</u>	3b	wnytwb) yhl )w wnyhl )
<u>God of Abraham</u>		Mhrb) yhl )
<u>God of Isaac and God of Jacob;</u>		bq(y yhl )w qxcy yhl )
<u>The great God, powerful and revered;</u>		) rwnhw rwbgh l wdgh l ) h
<u>Exalted God, owner of heaven and earth;</u>		Cr)w Mym# hnwq Nwy l ( l )
<u>Our shield, and shield of our fathers;</u>		wnytwb) Ngmw wnyngm
<u>Our refuge in all generations.</u>		rwdw rwd l kb wnyx+bm
<u>Blessed are you, Lord, shield of Abraham.</u>		Mhrb) Ngm yy ht) Kwr b
P2 = B2.		
<u>You are powerful, humbling the proud;</u>		My) g l yp#m rwbg ht)
<u>Strong, and judging the violent;</u>		Mycyr ( Nydmw qzx
<u>Alive forever, raising the dead;</u>		Mytm Myqm Mym l w( yx
<u>Making wind blow and dew fall;</u>		l +h dyrwmw xwrh by#m
<u>Sustaining the living, reviving the dead.</u>		Mytmh hyxm Myyx l kl km
<u>Like the fluttering of an eye,</u>		Ny( Prhk
<u>make our salvation sprout.</u>		xymct wnl h(w#y
<u>Blessed are you Lord, reviving the dead</u>		Mytmh hyxm yy ht) Kwr b
P3 = B3.		
You are <u>holy</u> , and revered is your name,		Km# ) rwnw ht) #wdq
and there is no God beside you.	4a	Kyd(l bm hwl ) Ny)w
<u>Blessed are you Lord, the holy God.</u>		#wdqh l )h yy ht) Kwr b
P4 = B4.		
<u>Endow us, our Father,</u>		wnyb) wnynx
<u>with understanding from you,</u>		Kt) m h(yd
<u>and discernment and insight from your Torah.</u>		Kytrwtm l k#hw hnybw

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discussed which were found by Jacob Mann, which he called fragments #6 (T-S 8 H 9.4), #7 (T-S 8 H 24.5), #8 (Add.3160.6) in "Geniza Fragments of the Palestinian Order of Service" (*HUCA* 2, 1925, 269-338).

Blessed are you Lord,  
gracious giver of understanding

yy ht) Kwrb  
t(dh NnwX

P5 = B5.

Cause us to repent, Lord, to you,  
and we will repent.

Kyl ) yy wnby#h  
hbW#nW

Renew our days as at the start.

Mdqk wnymy #dx

Blessed are you Lord, \*

yy ht) Kwrb

who desires repentance.

hbW#tb hcwrh

\* Schechter omitted ht) though it is clearly present in the Geniza MS.

P6 = B6.

Forgive us our Father,  
for we have sinned against you.

wnyb) wnl hl s  
Kl wn) +x yk

Blot out and remove our transgressions  
from before your eyes,

wny(#p rb(hw hXm  
Kyny( dgnm

for your compassion is great.

Kymxr Mybr yk

Blessed are you Lord, who abundantly forgives.

xwl sl hbrmh yy ht) Kwrb

P7 = B7.

Look on our affliction and plead our cause,  
and redeem us for the sake of your name.

wnbyr hbyrw wny(b h) r  
Km# N(ml wnyl) gw

Blessed are you Lord, the redeemer of Israel.

l) r#y l) wg yy ht) Kwrb

P8 = B8.

Heal us, Lord our God,  
from the heaviness of our heart and grief,  
and remove sighing from us,  
and raise up healing for our wounds.

4b

wnyhl ) yy wny) pr  
Nwgyw wnbI bw) kmm  
wnmm rb(h hXn) w  
wnytwkml h) wpr hl (hw

\* Blessed are you Lord, who heals  
the sick of his people Israel.

) pwr yy ht) Kwrb  
l) r#y wm( yl wx

\* Schechter omitted yy though it is clearly present in the Geniza MS.

P9 = B9.

Bless to us, Lord our God,  
this year to our benefit,  
with all kinds of produce,  
and bring near quickly  
the final year of our redemption.  
Give dew and rain upon the ground,  
and satisfy the world  
from the storehouses of your goodness,  
and give a blessing on the work of our hands.  
Blessed are you Lord, who blesses the years.

wnyhl ) yy wnyl ( Krb  
hbW+l t) zh hn#h t)  
ht) wbt ynym l kb  
hrhm brqw  
wnytl w) g Cq tn#  
hmd) h ynp l ( r+mw l + Ntw  
Ml w( (b#w  
Kbw+ twrcw) m  
wnydy h#(mb hkrb Ntw  
Myn#h Krbm yy ht) Kwrb

P10 = B10.

Blow on the great *Shophar*  
for our freedom,  
and lift up a banner  
for the gathering of our redeemed [exiles].  
Blessed are you Lord who gathers  
the expelled of his people Israel.

l wdg rpw#b (qt  
wnytwryxl  
Mn ) #w  
wnytwyl ) g Cwbyql  
Cbqm yy ht) Kwrb  
l ) r#y wm( yxdn

P11 = B11.

Restore our judges as in former times,  
and our counsellors as in the beginning;  
and reign over us – you alone.  
Blessed are you Lord, lover of justice.

hnw#) rbk wny+pw# hby#h  
hl xtbk wnyc(wyw  
Kdbl ht) wnyl ( Kwl mw  
+p#mh bhw) yy ht) Kwrb

P12 = B12.

For the apostates let there be no hope,  
and may the kingdom of the arrogant  
be quickly uprooted in our days;  
and may the *Nazûrim*<sup>16</sup> and *Minim*  
instantly perish;  
may they be blotted from the book of the living,  
and not be written with the righteous.  
Blessed are you Lord,  
humbler of the arrogant.

5a

hwqt yht l ) Mydmw#ml  
Nwdz twkl mw  
wnymyb rq( t hrhm  
Mynymhw Myrcnhw  
wdb)y (grk  
Myyxh rpsm wxmy  
wbtky l ) Myqydc M(w  
yy ht) Kwrb  
Mydz (ynkm

P13 = B13.

To the righteous proselytes  
may your compassion be lavished,  
and give to us a good reward  
with those who do your will.  
Blessed are you Lord, trust of the righteous.

qdch yryg l (   
Kymxr wmyh  
bw+ rk# wnl Ntw  
Knwcr y#w( M(   
Myqydc l x+bm yy ht) Kwrb

P14 = B14.

Have compassion, Lord our God,  
with your great compassion,  
upon Israel your people,  
and upon Jerusalem your city,  
and upon Zion, the dwelling of your honour,  
\*and upon your Temple,  
\*and upon your Residence,  
and upon the royal house of David,  
your righteously anointed one.

wnyhl ) yy Mxr  
Mybrh Kymxrb  
Km( l ) r#y l (   
Kry( Ml #wry l (w  
Kdwbk Nk#m Nwyc l (w  
Kl kyh l (w  
Knw( m l (w  
dywd tyb twkl m l (w  
Kqdc xy#m

<sup>16</sup> This may be vocalised as *Notzerim*, but the evidence of Tertullian (*Marc.4.8.1*) and Augustine (*ep.112.13*) suggest that it was pronounced *Nazûrim*.

Blessed are you Lord, God of David  
builder of Jerusalem.

dywd yhl ) yy ht) Kwr#  
MI #wry hnw

\*The English translation of Heinemann accidentally omitted these crucial lines.

P15=B16.

Hear, Lord our God, the voice of our prayers  
and have compassion upon us;  
for you are the God of grace and compassion.  
Blessed are you Lord, hearer of prayer.

5b wnytl ypt l wqb wnyhl ) yy (m#  
wnyl ( Mxrw  
ht) Mwxrw Nwnx l ) yk  
hl pt (mw# yy ht) Kwr#

P16=B17.

May it be your will, Lord our God,  
to dwell in Zion,  
and may your servants serve you  
in Jerusalem  
Blessed are you Lord,  
whom we shall serve in reverence.

wnyhl ) yy hcr  
Nwycb Nwk#w  
Kydb( Kwdb(yw  
MI #wryb  
yy ht) Kwr#  
dwb(n h) ryb Ktw) #

P17=B18.

We give thanks to you,  
[for] you are the Lord our God,  
and God of our fathers,  
for all the goodness,  
the loving-kindness and compassion  
with which you repaid us,  
and prepared for us  
and for our fathers before us;  
and if we say: our foot slipped  
your loving-kindness, Lord, holds us up [Ps.94.18].  
Blessed are you Lord,  
[for it is] good to give thanks to you.

Kl wnxn) Mydwm  
wnyhl ) yy )wh ht)  
wnytwb) yhl )w  
twbw+h l k l ( )  
Mymxrhws dxh  
wntl mg#  
wnm( hty#( #w  
wnynpl m wnytwb) M(w  
wnyl gr h+m wnrn) M)w  
wnyd(sy yy Kdsx  
yy ht) Kwr#  
twdwhl Kl bw+h

P18=B19.

Place your peace  
upon Israel your people,  
and upon your city,  
and upon your inheritance.  
and bless us all as one.

KmwI # My#  
Km( l ) r#y l ( )  
Kry( l ( w  
Ktl xn l ( w  
dx) k wnl wk wnrbw

\* Blessed are you Lord, maker of peace.

Mwl #h h#w( yy ht) Kwr#

\* Schechter accidentally repeated most of P18 in the middle of the last line.

## Early elements in Schechter's Geniza fragment

The text of the Eighteen, as found in Schechter's Geniza fragment and often shared by other versions, has several indications that it originated before 70 CE. The earliest Babylonian version, by contrast, has many differences which suggest that it was revised after 70 CE.

*The theology of the #2* appears to be anti-Sadducean, especially in the form which we have, because it praises God who raises the dead. Schechter's Geniza fragment describes the resurrection occurring 'like the fluttering of an eye',<sup>17</sup> which is strikingly similar to Paul's phrase  $\epsilon\delta\ \rho\eta\tau\ \sigma\alpha\lambda\ \mu\omega\upsilon$ ='in the twinkling of an eye' (1Cor.15.52). This benediction is called 'the Powers',<sup>18</sup> after the opening words, and it is possible that Jesus referred to this title when he argued about the resurrection with the Sadducees, saying that they "know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt.22.29; Mk.12.24).

*The wording of #14* changed dramatically between the earliest Palestinian version and the earliest Babylonian one. The main difference is that the Palestinian version appears to be a benediction for Jerusalem with a benediction concerning David slotted in, while the Babylonian version is solely about Jerusalem and adds a separate benediction for David. Also, more significantly for this paper, the Palestinian version assumes that the Temple is still standing, while the Babylonian version assumes it is destroyed.

*Palestinian #14 (Geniza):*

Have compassion, Lord our God,  
with your great compassion,  
upon Israel your people,  
and upon Jerusalem your city,  
and upon Zion, the dwelling of your honour,  
and upon your Temple,  
and upon your Residence,  
and upon the royal house of David,  
your righteously anointed one.

Blessed are you Lord, God of David  
builder of Jerusalem.

*Babylonian #14 (Amram):*

Upon Jerusalem your city, return in  
compassion and build her soon in our days.

Blessed are you Lord,  
builder of Jerusalem.

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<sup>17</sup> This is present in the fragment which Schechter transcribed in full, but it is not present in the first of the additional texts which he found. This additional text spans from #1-#13, mostly with the same text as transcribed here, though with some significant differences in #2 and #9. The differences in #9 have little significance, because Finkelstein found a wide variety of differences in this benediction in the various traditions, probably because it varies with seasons and climate. The differences in benediction #2, which do not come from the Babylonian traditions, are the omission of "Alive forever, raising the dead" and "like the fluttering of an eye", and the substitution of "make our salvation sprout" with "strong to save" ( $(y\#whl\ brw)$ ) and of "humbling the proud, strong and judging the violent" with "and no one is strong like you and no one disregards you" ( $(K\ t\ l\ wz\ Ny)\ w\ qz\ x\ Kw\ m\ k\ Ny)\ w$ ). One of fragments discovered by Mann (#6) also includes benediction #2, and it too omits "like the fluttering of an eye" and "Make our salvation sprout", and adds "and no one speaks evil of you" ( $(K\ l\ h\ m\ w\ d\ Ny)\ w$ ) after "sustaining the living, reviving the dead". Schechter's first text, which is transcribed here, is the only one with this archaic phrase "like the fluttering of an eye".

<sup>18</sup> mRH.4.5. This is in an anonymous tradition which is commented on by R. Johanan b. Nuri (120-140 CE), so this name for the benediction dates to at least the early second century.

*Babylonian 15 (Amram):*

Make the offshoot of David flourish speedily.  
Blessed are you Lord, who causes  
the horn of salvation to flourish.

The Babylonian version is clearly written after the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. It changes the first line from "have compassion..." to "return in compassion", as if God has abandoned the city, and adds "build her soon in our days". The Palestinian version has a long section listing the aspects of Jerusalem on which God should have compassion, all of which appear to assume that the city and Temple are still standing. In particular, God is asked to look in compassion "upon Zion, the dwelling (Nk#m) of your honour". This is opposite to the impression given in the Babylonian version that God has abandoned the city. The two lines which assume a pre-70 CE viewpoint are those which call for God's compassion "upon your Temple (Kl kyh), and upon your Residence(Knw(m))."<sup>19</sup> The term l kyh is only used in rabbinic literature of the Temple, and the term Nw(m) is used of God's residence, in the Temple or in heaven.<sup>20</sup> These two phrases were inexplicably omitted from the English translation of Heinemann's *Prayer*,<sup>21</sup> and this omission has been copied by others, which may explain why the significance of these lines has been missed.<sup>22</sup>

*The wording of #P16-18 (= #B17-19) demonstrates the same kind of differences as seen in #14. The Babylonian version gives no hint that God still dwells in Jerusalem, and prays "restore the service to your holy House... and let our eyes behold your return in mercy to*

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<sup>19</sup> These two lines are missing from Schechter's second additional fragment, which spans #14-#18 and follows the text transcribed here, with some differences mainly in #14 and #18. The differences in #18 (or #B19) are not very significant because there are numerous differences in the various traditions of this benediction, as though this is the benediction where the leader added his final flourishes. The differences in #14 in Schechter's second additional fragment are the omission of "with great compassion upon Israel, your people" and "and upon your Temple, and upon your Residence", and the addition after "David your anointed one" of "build your House; establish your Temple" (Kl kyh l l k# K tyb hnb). Mann's fragment which contains this benediction (fragment #7) also omits these phrases and also omits "Have compassion, Lord our God, with your great compassion", "upon Zion, the dwelling of your honour", and "upon the royal house of David, your righteously anointed one", and after "To Jerusalem your city", it adds "with blessings you will return and establish [her] exactly as you revealed" (trbyd r#) k hkwtb Nwk#tw bw#t Mymxrb). Therefore, all these other fragments of the Eighteen which are preserved in the Geniza contain wording which has been changed to reflect the new reality after the Temple was destroyed.

<sup>20</sup> See Jastrow *Dictionary* ad loc.

<sup>21</sup> Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, pp.26-29. The text of the Eighteen is printed in a long footnote which extends over four pages which also contain other text above the footnote. The missing lines would be expected at the bottom of the third page, so the most likely explanation is an error at the typesetting stage. The fault is not Heinemann's (these lines are present in his Hebrew original) and it is very unlikely that the translator, Richard Sarason made this mistake.

<sup>22</sup> For example, E.P. Sanders *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 B.C.E.-66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992) pp.204f; D.K. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and festival prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) p. 201. An accurate English translation occurs in the revised version of Emil Schürer *The History of the Jewish People* II p.456-459, but the revisers did not change Schürer's conclusion (which was first published before the Geniza text was available) and said that the wording of the Geniza text comes from 70-100 CE (p. 459). Dugmore also has a correct English translation in his *Influence of the Synagogue* but he does not mention these lines when discussing the date of the Eighteen (pp. 22-25).

Zion. Blessed are you Lord, who restores your divine presence to Zion." (#B17). Schechter's Geniza fragment, in contrast, appears to assume that God is still being served in Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

None of the early features in Schechter's Geniza fragment made the prayer unusable after 70 CE, because even the references to God's Temple in Jerusalem could be regarded as a prayer that it might be *restored* to Jerusalem. However, the wording of this version stands in marked contrast to the other surviving versions which change the wording in varying degrees to conform to the post-70 CE situation.

In conclusion, the earliest Palestinian version, as represented by Schechter's Geniza fragment, contain wording which originated before 70 CE, while the earliest Babylonian version, as represented by Amram, has many differences which suggest that it was changed for use by a post-70 CE community. This does not mean, of course, that the Schechter's Geniza fragment represent the exact wording of a pre-70 CE community, but it does indicate that there was a great deal of conservatism in the transmission of this version.

### **The curse of the *Minim***

Benediction #12 contains a curse directed at the *Minim*, and also at the *Nazûrim* in Schechter's Geniza fragment,<sup>24</sup> which reads "may they instantly perish" (wdb) y (grk). This curse is clearly a later insertion into an already extant benediction, because it occurs in different places in the two versions (before and after "may the kingdom of the arrogant be quickly uprooted in our days") and because there is no reference to any part of this curse in the final summary line.

*Palestinian 12 (Geniza):*

For the apostates let there be no hope,  
and may the kingdom of the arrogant  
be quickly uprooted in our days;

and may *Nazûrim* and *Minim* instantly perish;  
may they be blotted from the book of the living,

and not be written with the righteous.

Blessed are you Lord,  
humbler of the arrogant.

*Babylonian 12 (Amram):*

For the apostates let there be no hope,  
and may *Minim* instantly perish  
and all the enemies of your people be cut  
off;

and may the kingdom of the arrogant  
be quickly uprooted and crushed and  
humbled

in our days

Blessed are you Lord, breaker of enemies  
and humbler of the arrogant.

The reference to *Nazûrim* is usually regarded as a reference to Christians, who were occasionally known as the "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24.5), or to the early sect of Jewish

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<sup>23</sup> Reif has already pointed out that some variants of this benediction assume a pre-70 situation – see Reif, Stefan C., "Jerusalem in Jewish liturgy", *Judaism* 46, 1997, 159-168, esp. pp. 164-7.

<sup>24</sup> The word מַרְגֵּנִי occurs also in T-S 8 H 24.5 and T-S K27.18. In T-S K27.33b the ink is cracked and entirely missing for most of the letters of this word (unlike the rest of the text), as if many people have pointed at it or rubbed it with their fingers (which may well have been the case). Schechter expressed no doubt about the reading, so perhaps it was clearer when he looked at it. The only other place where this word occurs among the MSS which Finkelstein examined, is the atypical version of Amram in Bodlean MS Neubauer 1095.

Christian known as the Nazarenes. The early Church Fathers felt that it was directed at all Christians.<sup>25</sup>

The "kingdom of the arrogant" sounds like the perception of the Roman occupation by Jews in the early first century. After this time the rabbis discouraged criticism of the Roman authorities (cf. mAb.3.2—though of course derogatory remarks were still made), and it is difficult to know what other 'kingdom' could be referred to. Later Rabbis suggested that it was a reference to Christians - Hai Gaon (9<sup>th</sup> C) and Judah ha-Levi (12<sup>th</sup> C) derived 'apostates' (*meshummadim*, מְשֻׁמְמָדִים) from 'baptised' (*meshulmad*, מְשֻׁלְמָד).<sup>26</sup> However, it is unlikely that the new sect of Christians would have been regarded as a 'kingdom' before the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the term 'apostates' is used elsewhere of those who are outside the covenant.<sup>27</sup>

The *Minim* is a general term for 'heretic' in rabbinic literature, and they are not defined in this prayer, though many identities have been proposed.<sup>28</sup> The majority consensus is that this referred to Jewish heretics in general, or perhaps to Christians because they are linked with the *Nazirim*.<sup>29</sup> It will be argued below that '*Minim*' refers to the Sadducees when they had the High Priesthood during the Second Temple period.

The composition of this insertion is traditionally attributed to Samuel the Lesser in the time of Gamaliel II (c. 80-120 CE), at the same time that the number (or perhaps the order) of benedictions was fixed by Simeon ha-Pakuli.

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<sup>25</sup> Tertullian says specifically that 'the Jews call us *Nazareni*' (*Marc.4.8.1*), and Justin says repeatedly that the Jews curse Christians in the Synagogue and speak disparagingly about them after their prayers (*Dialogue* 16, 93, 95, 96, 123, 133). This evidence is weighed carefully in Horbury, William, "The benediction of the Minim and early Jewish-Christian controversy" (*Journal of Theological Studies* NS 33, 1982, 19-61). The two occurrences of this term in Talmud both refer to Christians, as shown in Kimelman, Reuven, "Birkat ha-minim and the lack of evidence for an anti-Christian Jewish prayer in late antiquity" in *Jewish and Christian self-definition*, 2; ed by E Sanders, 1981, 226-244, p.241.

<sup>26</sup> Both Hai Gaon and Judah ha-Levi are cited in Horbury, "The benediction of the Minim" p.45f.

<sup>27</sup> An anonymous baraita in bHor.11a, commented on by R. Jose b R. Judah (165-200 CE), says an 'apostate' is someone who ate forbidden fat, and in Sifra re Lev.1.2, "the *meshummadim* are excluded since they do not accept the covenant". This is expanded in bHull.5a : It is permitted to receive sacrifices from the transgressors of Israel, in order that through them they may come to repent, but not from the *meshummad* or one who pours (idolatrous) libations, or violates the Sabbath in public". Lawrence Schiffman ("At the Crossroads: Tannaitic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism" in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 2; ed by E Sanders, 1981, 115-156, p.145f. ) concludes from these that the original reference was to those who were part of Israel, but these sources merely show that this is how they were later interpreted. This later interpretation is also seen in a fragment of Mann (#6) which substitutes "if they do not return to your Torah" (קַיְרַוְתִּי וְבִשְׁמַדִּי) instead of "and may the kingdom of the arrogantly-sinful be quickly uprooted in our days".

<sup>28</sup> The various proposals are well summarised by Katz, pp.69-74

<sup>29</sup> See especially the discussions in Horbury, "The benediction of the Minim"; Schiffman, "At the Crossroads"; Kimelman, "Birkat ha-minim and the lack of evidence"; Horst, Pieter W van der, "The Birkat ha-minim in Recent Research" (*Expository Times* 105, 1994, 363-368).

**bBer.28b.f:** (cf bMeg.17b)

Our Rabbis taught: Simeon ha-Pakuli  
arranged the eighteen benedictions  
before Rabban Gamaliel [II], in order,  
in Jabneh.  
Rabban Gamaliel said to them,  
to the Sages:  
Which man knows how to compose  
a benediction about the *Minim*?  
Samuel the Lesser arose and composed it.  
The next year he forgot it,  
and he tried to think of it for two or three hours  
and they did not dismiss him.

yl wqph Nw(m# .Nnbr wnt  
twkrb hr#( hnwm# rydsh  
rdsh l ( l )yl mg Nbr ynpl  
.hnbyb  
l )yl mg Nbr Mhl rm)  
.Mymkxl  
Nqtl (dwy# Md) #y Mwl k  
?Mynymh tkrb  
,hnqtw N+qh l )wm# dm(  
.hxx# trx) hn#l  
tw(# #l #w Myt# hb Pyq#hw  
.whwl (h )l w

It is difficult to know when to date this tradition. Biographical traditions are often later inventions, though much more care was taken with traditions which involved halakhic rulings. Further caution is needed because this tradition contains indications that it has been edited.

As it is written, the significance of this tradition is not so much the introduction of the benediction of the *Minim*, but the fact that Samuel the Lesser was not dismissed from leading the prayers when he forgot the wording. A later tradition (yBer.5.4, 9c) says that a prayer leader was dismissed if he made a mistake in one of the three benedictions which test the orthodoxy of the prayer leader. The three testing benedictions are #2 (because a Sadducee would have difficulty praising God for resurrection from death), #14 (because a Samaritan would have difficulty blessing Jerusalem) and #12 concerning the *Minim*. This tradition (bBer.28b) explains why Samuel the Lesser was not expelled – because he was the author of the benediction. Perhaps this tradition was invented by later Rabbis to justify his non-dismissal, or perhaps he really *was* the author of the words of this benediction. Probably the last part of this tradition, from "The next year he forgot it.." was a biographical note which was added later.

The words "in Jabneh" and "to the Sages" also appear to have been added later, because they are entirely superfluous to the text and out of place. If they had been in the original version, one would expect 'in Jabneh' immediately after 'Gamaliel'<sup>30</sup> and one would expect 'to the Sages' in place of 'to them' (Mhl ). These phrases have probably been added in order to link the tradition with Gamaliel II and Jabneh. Without these additional phrases, the tradition could refer to Gamaliel I who lived in the last generation of the Temple.

To date the tradition, we have to look at the other datable elements within it – the two other named individuals and the curse of the *Minim*. Unfortunately, Simeon ha-Pakuli is impossible

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<sup>30</sup> This would also mean that 'in order' (rdsh l ( ) would be at the end of the sentence unit, as is normal for this term (cf. mYom.5.7; bRH.34b 2x; bYom.32a, 71a 2x, bMeg.17b, 18a; bSan.49b) - this tradition is the only place in Babli where rdsh l ( is not at the end of a sentence unit.

to date because he occurs nowhere else, and Samuel the Lesser occurs very infrequently, though what we do know of him fits better into the first century than the second.

Samuel the Lesser is normally regarded as belonging to the second Tannaitic generation (c. 80-120 CE), but the reason for this dating is the tradition which we are examining here. However, he is also attributed with sayings which fit into a pre-70 CE context, and he was traditionally supposed to be a disciple of Hillel (SongR.8.13<sup>31</sup>), so one would expect him to be part of the previous generation which was the generation of Gamaliel I. It is also significant that he and Simeon ha-Pakuli are not called 'Rabbi'. Very few named individuals lack this title after 70 CE, unless they lack rabbinic expertise,<sup>32</sup> and considering that these two have supposedly made authoritative contributions before the Sanhedrin, one would expect them to have the title 'Rabbi'. Before 70 CE, however, Sages did not have this title unless they were also respected priests.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, although the few traditions which are associated with Samuel the Lesser are historically unreliable and contain obvious problems, they do, with this tradition, fit into an overall picture of someone who was active before 70 CE.

The wording of the curse of the *Minim* also suggests a pre-70 CE date. The precise wording of the curse was clearly considered to be significant, because Samuel was almost dismissed for forgetting it. If the wording was not important, he could simply have cursed the *Minim* with some other words, but it appears that this would not have been sufficient. The words

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<sup>31</sup> "On another occasion when the sages of Israel were taking a vote in the vineyard in Jabneh ... a Bath Kol went forth and said to them, 'There is among you a man who is fit to receive the holy spirit, but his generation is not worthy of the privilege,' and they all fixed their eyes on Samuel the Lesser. When he died, they mourned saying, 'Ah, modest, ah, pious soul, worthy disciple of Hillel the Elder!' He also said three things just before his death: Simeon and Ishmael will perish by the sword, and [the rest of] his colleagues will be put to death, and the rest of the people will be despoiled, and great tribulations will come upon the world! and he said this in Aramaic." (Soncino translation). The 'Simeon and Ishmael' are, according to Rashi on bSot. 48b, Rabban Simeon the Patriarch and R. Ishmael the High Priest. This account is very uncertain historically, but it contains avoidable problems which would not be present if this was a complete fabrication. Samuel is supposedly in the Vineyard of Jabneh and yet he is also called a disciple of Hillel, who died in the 1st C BCE. Also, he is attributed with sayings in Aramaic, when post-70 traditions tend to be in Hebrew, and his sayings appear to be warnings of the destruction at 70 CE. His title as 'a worthy disciple of Hillel' may not indicate a direct discipleship, because in the tradition cited just immediately before this, Hillel is called a "worthy disciple of Ezra". However, this does not solve all the problems, which would be easily avoided if someone had constructed this tradition without any pre-existing wording. It is likely that this tradition was based on older material, and that the location in the vineyard of Jabneh is a later addition, perhaps influenced by the tradition of the writing of the benediction of the *Minim* which was 'in Jabneh' (bBer.28b).

<sup>32</sup> Of the 42 individuals of the 2nd Tannaitic generation who are named in rabbinic literature, all have the title 'Rabbi', except for a few who were given an honorific title of familiarity ('Abba' or simply 'Ben'). The only exceptions are Boethus b. Zonin (a lay man who asked the Sages a question in bPes.37a, cf. bBB.13b), Onkelos (a proselyte who is attributed with editing the Targum), Simeon brother of Azariah and Nahum of Gimzu. Of these, only Simeon and Nahum made halakhic rulings, so that one would expect them to have the title 'Rabbi'. Later commentators were surprised at Simeon's lack of a title, and suggested that Azariah was given the credit because he supported Simeon financially (Lev.R.25.2). Nahum is only known for one ruling which he 'whispered' to Akiba (bBer.22a).

<sup>33</sup> Of the 46 individuals of the 1st and pre-Tannaitic generations which are named in rabbinic literature, the only individuals who are given the title 'Rabbi' are R. Eleazar b. Harsom, R. Hanina, Chief of the priests, R. Ishmael b. Phabi, R. Johanan (Nehunia) b. Gudgada, R. Simeon of Mizpah and R. Measha. All of these except one were priests who were either of very high rank or were respected among the Sages, so it was probably a special title of respect for priests before 70 CE. The one exception, R. Measha, is only known from mPea.2.6, which does not tell us if he was a priest or not.

"instantly perish" do not seem to be especially significant, until one looks at the use of the Hebrew words in Scripture. The verb 'perish' (db) occurs frequently in Scripture, but the word 'instantly' ((grk) only occurs in two passages, and both of them in a passage which contains db). The context<sup>34</sup> of the first occurrence is the story of Korah and his followers, who wrongly offered incense in their censers before the Lord (Num.16.21,45 [17.10]), and "perished" (Num.16.33) as a result. Secondly it occurs in Ps.73 concerning the problem of sinners who are rich and at ease, whom the psalmist concludes will "become desolate instantly" (Ps.73.19) and will "perish" (Ps.73.27). It is probably significant that Samuel the Lesser, who is attributed with authoring this curse, is also attributed with an exegesis on Eccl.7.15 concerning the apparent prosperity of the wicked (Eccl.7.24), and an exegesis of Prov.24.17 on God's eventual judgement of the wicked (mAb.4.19).

Both of these passages would be regarded by the Pharisees as criticisms of the Sadducees. Rabbinic traditions and Josephus accused the Sadducees of luxuriating in their wealth,<sup>35</sup> and there must have been a great deal of debate about why God allowed the wicked Sadducees to prosper. Psalm 73 deals with precisely this problem. Also, the carrying of incense in the censer by the High Priest was a very important point of dispute between the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Pharisees said that on the Day of Atonement the incense should be lit only within the Holy of Holies, while the Sadducees said it should be lit before entering the Holy of Holies.<sup>36</sup> This was a huge problem to the Pharisees, because it threatened to invalidate the most important ceremony in the Temple calendar. The incident of Korah demonstrated what happened when people presumed to offer incense wrongly. The incident of Korah was a singularly effective curse passage because the story was often linked with the subject of excommunication,<sup>37</sup> and, because the story concerns the right of Korah and the others to offer incense, it may also have echoed the charge that the Jerusalem priesthood was illegitimate.

This suggests that the curse of the *Minim*, "may they instantly perish", was a carefully crafted exegetical criticism of the Sadducees, reminding them of God's judgement on the wicked who prosper, and on those who offer incense wrongly. These criticisms applied to the Sadducees specifically when they were in charge of the High Priesthood.

In later rabbinic writings, the general term *Minim* continued to be used, either as a general reference to 'heretics', or as a reference to Christians.<sup>38</sup> When the reference to Christians was too obvious, it was frequently changed to "Sadducees" in order to avoid trouble with the

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<sup>34</sup> The context of an allusion is extremely important in early rabbinic exegesis, as I have shown in *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 30 (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1992). The context of scripture allusions in the Eighteen has also been shown to be significant by Reuven Kimelman in "The daily Amidah and the rhetoric of redemption" (*Jewish Quarterly Review* 79, 1988/9, 165-197) esp. pp. 180f.

<sup>35</sup> ARNa.5=ARNb.10 "They used vessels all of silver and all of gold all their days, not because they were ostentatious but the Sadducees say: The Pharisees have a tradition that they subject themselves [to austerity] in this world, but in the world to come they will not have anything". Cf. *Jos. Ant.* 13.297f.

<sup>36</sup> tKipp.1.8 and parallels. See the discussion in my *Techniques* pp. 101-104 and J.Z. Lauterbach "A Significant Controversy between the Sadducees and the Pharisees", *HUCA* 4 (1927), 173-205.

<sup>37</sup> Horbury, William, "Extirpation and Excommunication" (*VT* 35, 1985, 13-38) pp.36f.

<sup>38</sup> Kimelman, "Birkat ha-minim and the lack of evidence" esp. pp. 228-232 has shown that *Minim* in Tannaitic and Palestinian Amoraic literature always refers to Jewish heretics, including Jewish Christians, though Babylonian Amoraim also use it for Gentile heretics.

authorities.<sup>39</sup> This change is unconvincing, because there were virtually no Sadducees after 70 CE, and certainly no Sadducean movement.<sup>40</sup> Therefore the choice of "Sadducee" was probably influenced by a memory of the fact that the term *Minim* originally referred to them. Even as late as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Judah ha-Levi claimed that the Sadducees and Boethusians are 'the *Minim* for whose destruction we pray in the Prayer'. It might be argued that his opinion was a further attempt to avoid the charge of anti-Christian sentiments, but it is clear that this was not his motive, because he said that Christians are the 'apostates' (*meshu'madim*, Mydmw#m) who are mentioned at the start of the benediction: "and as for Jesus and his companions, they are the "baptised" (*meshu'madim*) who joined themselves to the sect of those who perform immersions in the Jordan."<sup>41</sup>

Therefore it seems likely that the curse of the *Minim* originated before 70 CE, because the wording of the curse of the *Minim* suggests a reference to the Sadducees of Temple times. Also it is likely that Samuel the Lesser lived before 70 CE because he is named without the title 'Rabbi', and his other traditions fit better before 70 CE. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that he was the author of this curse, as the tradition suggests, though these conclusions suggest that he was a contemporary of Gamaliel I, not Gamaliel II. The only reason for dating this tradition after 70 CE is the presence of the word 'in Jabneh' which, along with 'before the Sages' appear to have been added later in order to make a link with Gamaliel II. The reason for making this change may have been to give it the force of the Sanhedrin which was convened by Gamaliel II in "the vineyard of Jabneh".<sup>42</sup> This context gave the new benediction greater force than if it was authorised by an individual person, even if that individual was someone as great as Rabban Gamaliel I.

The reference to Gamaliel II may not be totally fictitious. He is attributed with other teaching on prayers and rites outside the Temple, and it seems that the establishment of liturgy after the Destruction was a special interest of his.<sup>43</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that he was involved in the fixing of the Eighteen, and that he made final decisions on this, perhaps in the context of the Sanhedrin as this tradition implies. In this case, he would have decided on the acceptance of the rulings of Simeon and Samuel, though they would not have appeared before him. From the text as it now stands, it is impossible to know if Samuel did originally deliver his ruling 'before Gamaliel [I]' or whether this too was added to the tradition. Either way, it is most likely that his ruling, and that of Samuel, date from the generation before Gamaliel II, but that Gamaliel II put them before the new Sanhedrin at Jabneh who ratified them as authoritative for all Israel.

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<sup>39</sup> E.g. mRH.2.1; bYom.40b; bSan.100b where most (including the Vilna ed.) read "Sadducees" but some (including the Munich MS) have "*Minim*".

<sup>40</sup> This is the conclusion of most scholars, including Ellis Rivkin in "Defining the Pharisees: The Tannaitic Sources" (*HUCA* 40/41, 1969/70, 205-49) and *A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within* (Abingdon: Nashville, 1978), though some, like Martin Goodman ("Sadducees and Essenes after 70 CE" in Stanley E. Porter, et al. eds., *Crossing the boundaries: essays in biblical interpretation in honour of Michael D Goulder*, Biblical Interpretation 8, Leiden, E J Brill, 1994, 347-56) have argued that they survived for a few centuries, but by the time the Talmuds were edited, the Sadducean movement had certainly disappeared.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Horbury, "The benediction of the Minim" p.45f.

<sup>42</sup> See mKet.4.6; bBer.63b; bYeb.42b, 75a; bBB131b.

<sup>43</sup> He was involved with establishment of the Passover liturgy (mPes.10:5), rules concerning the *Shema* (mBer.1.1) the Eighteen (mBer.4:3) and Grace after meals (mBer.6:8).

## Other additions to the Eighteen

According to an undateable tradition, three benedictions of the Eighteen were subject to regular insertions. It is likely that this tradition dates to a time soon after the fixing of the number of the Eighteen but before the wording was fixed, because the main message is that benedictions may be inserted into existing benedictions, which implies that they were not to be used as additional benedictions. The tradition exists in two slightly different forms, in Tosephta and in the Jerusalem Talmud. In the former, the benedictions are referred to by their main subject, and in the latter they are referred to by the wording of the final line.

### **tBer.3.25:** (anonymous)

One inserts the [benediction] concerning *Minim*  
in the one concerning *Perushin* [#12],  
and the one concerning 'proselytes'  
in the one concerning 'elders' [#13],  
and the one concerning 'David'  
in 'Jerusalem' [#14].  
If he recited each of them separately  
he has [still] fulfilled his obligation.

Mynym I # I I wk  
Ny#wrp I #b  
Myrg I #w  
Mynqz I #b  
dwd I #w  
Myl #wryb  
Nmc(I wl ) rm) M) w  
. ) cy Nmc(I wl ) w

### **yBer.4.3, I H, 17a:** (cited by R. Eliezer b. R. Jose, c. 140-165 CE)

One inserts the [benediction] concerning *Minim*  
in 'humbler of the arrogant' [#12]  
and the one concerning 'proselytes'  
and the one concerning 'elders'  
in 'the trust of the righteous' [#13],  
and the one concerning 'David'  
in 'rebuilds Jerusalem' [#14]

Mynym I # I I wk  
.Mydyz (ynkmb  
Myrg I #w  
Mynqz I #w  
.Myqydcl x+bmb  
dwd I #w  
Myl #wry hnwb

It is difficult to date either version, though the one in Jerusalem Talmud is most likely to be earlier because its form is less symmetrical, and memorisation tends to make traditions conform more closely to easily remembered structures. The asymmetry lies in benediction #13, which has two proposed changes while the benedictions #12 and #14 have only one. In Tosephta, each benediction has only one proposed change, so it is easier to memorise. One of the insertions which the Jerusalem Talmud discusses for #13 (the 'elders') is actually the title of benediction #13 in the Tosephta version, which either means that this change had already taken place, and the insertion had become the title of the benediction, or the original title had disappeared from the tradition as part of the process of becoming more symmetrical and memorable.

The additional words in the Tosephta version ("If he recited each of them separately, he has [still] fulfilled his obligation.") suggests that this version predates the fixing of the number at Eighteen or perhaps it is a reaction against an attempt to fix the number. Therefore, as a tentative conclusion, it would seem that the Jerusalem Talmud version is earliest, and that the Tosephta version predates the fixing of the number Eighteen which (as we saw above) dates probably to the time of Gamaliel II. The same type of sentiment (that prayer should not

be fixed) is expressed by R. Eliezer b. Hycanus at about this time<sup>44</sup>, which tends to confirm this dating. It is not clear whether these additional words are part of the same tradition which forms the list of changes, or whether it was added as a comment to this list. The latter solution would explain why they are missing from the version in Jerusalem Talmud, but on the other hand, one would expect Eliezer b. R. Jose (who cited this tradition) to omit a ruling which had been supplanted when the number of the benedictions became fixed.

Therefore, we may conclude that the Tosephta version of the list of changes dates to the generation of Gamaliel II and Eliezer (about 80-120 CE). By this time the list had already become simplified, leaving only one change for each benediction. The additional words about reciting them separately were probably added later, during the time of Eliezer who expresses similar sentiments, so the original list probably dated from at least a generation before, from the time of Gamaliel I.

Most of these changes are known to us from various versions of the Eighteen benedictions. The insertion of the *Minim* is discussed above. The insertion of 'David' was noted above, where we saw that the Palestinian version inserts a blessing about David into #14, while the Babylonian version adds it as a separate benediction #15, which suggests that this ruling was enforced only in Palestine.

The changes proposed to #13 are puzzling, because only a few of the ancient versions contain a reference to the 'Elders',<sup>45</sup> while the earliest versions of this benediction already appear to be already concerned with proselytes. The words of this benediction which are shared by both the Palestinian and Babylonian versions, are: "To the righteous proselytes may your compassion be lavished, and give [them] a good reward. Blessed are you Lord, trust of the righteous." If this tradition about the insertions is correct, the word 'proselytes' is an addition, so the original benediction concerned the rewards of the righteous. This would agree with the fact that the final line (which is generally the most resistant to changes) does not mention 'proselytes'. Therefore it is likely that word 'proselytes' was not part of the original benediction, and that it was probably added some time in the first century.

The other surprise in this tradition is the reference to פְּרוּשִׁין which is either *paroshin*, 'separatists' or *Perushin*, 'Pharisees'.<sup>46</sup> In the Tosephta tradition this is the title of the benediction into which one inserts '*Minim*', which is identified as 'humbler of the arrogant' (i.e. #12) in the Jerusalem Talmud tradition. This is surprising because there is no surviving version of the Eighteen which retains the term פְּרוּשִׁין, and yet it was important enough at one time to be known as the title of benediction #12.

The terms *paroshin* and *Perushin* are related and somewhat inseparable. It is likely that *Perushin* was originally a disparaging title given to the Pharisees by the Sadducees, who

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<sup>44</sup> See note 7 above.

<sup>45</sup> Finkelstein, "Development of the Amidah" (n.99 p.132) finds it, for example in *Ez Hayyim*, the rite used by English congregations in pre-expulsion times. He said that his text was a copy of Leipzig MS XVII which was in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Cat. Adler, 4055-7). Elbogen failed to find "elders" in any early texts, though he found it in later rites of the Ashkenaz and Sepharad (*Jewish liturgy*, p. 46-47).

<sup>46</sup> Rivkin has analysed all the occurrences of *Perushim* in rabbinic literature though Cohen and Bowker doubt whether they are the same as the predecessors of the Sages. See Cohen, Shaye J.D., "The significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, rabbis, and the end of Jewish sectarianism" (*Hebrew Union College Annual* 55, 1984, 27-53); Bowker, John, *Jesus and the Pharisees* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973).

accused them of being separatists because of their holiness code which tended to make them avoid contact with people. This title came to be widely used, rather like the title 'Christians' which was originally assigned to them by outsiders (Act.11:26). In rabbinic literature the title *Perushin* was used for referring to the early Pharisees, though in later rabbinic literature it was used for separatist or fanatical individuals.<sup>47</sup>

The Tosephta tradition implies that the use of *Perushin* in #12 preceded the use of *Minim*, which means that it was in use at least as early as the first century. This makes it likely that it referred to the Pharisees, and not to the small separatist groups which retained this title after 70 CE. Therefore it is likely that the Sadducees inserted *Perushin* into #12, just as the Pharisees inserted *Minim*, referring to the Sadducees.

Therefore, when the tradition in the Tosephta says that one should 'insert *Minim* in the one concerning *Perushin*' it presumably means that one should use *Minim* instead of *Perushin*. This also makes it likely that 'Proselytes' was a replacement for 'Elders' in #13, which originally concerned the 'Righteous Elders'—a title which may have been regarded as Sadducean. This would explain why we have no surviving texts with either of these versions, because all our texts have been preserved by the descendants of the Pharisees.

It is impossible to construct a chronological development of the Eighteen based on these traditions, because as Heinemann showed, there were probably several variants in use concurrently in different places or even within the same synagogue. The early Palestinian version which has survived in Schechter's Geniza fragment has already incorporated all the changes which were suggested in this tradition. It contains the insertions about the *Minim*, the Proselytes and David. What it does not have is any reference to 'Elders' in benediction #13, nor the *Perushin* in #12, both of which were present already, according to the Tosephta version. There are few references to 'Elders' in ancient versions of the Eighteen, and its appearance those few is probably the result of this tradition – i.e. a later rabbi added a reference to Elders in #13 because he knew, from this tradition, that this insertion was allowable. The absence of any version containing a reference to *Perushin* is probably, as suggested above, due to the sudden diminution of Sadducean influence after 70 CE. It is possible that the reference to the 'Elders' was also a former tradition which was no longer maintained.

There is no mention of *Nazûrim* in this record of insertions. This probably means that the insertion of *Nazûrim* post-dates this tradition. It is unlikely that the insertion of *Nazûrim* pre-dates this list of insertions because the list mentions elements which have already disappeared by the time of the text preserved in Schechter's Geniza fragment – i.e. '*Perushin*' and 'Elders'. I have argued above that this list dates back to at least the last generation of the Second Temple period. *Nazûrim* are already named in Schechter's Geniza fragment, the wording of which suggests that it came from a pre-70 CE context. These factors, taken together, suggest that the curse of the *Nazûrim* was added not long before 70 CE, though this conclusion is based on many uncertainties. The list of changes may have come from a

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<sup>47</sup> The fact that post-70 references to *Perushim* generally have the connotation of 'sectarians' suggests that only those who refused to join the Jabneh movement continued to be called by this title. The earliest such reference is by R. Joshua b. Hananiah (c. 80-120 CE) in mSot.3.4. See also a later reference to the *Perushim* 'after the Temple was destroyed' in tSot.15.11. Pharisees are criticised before 70 CE in the Gospels and in some Qumran texts (e.g. Nahum Commentary 2, 8:10; Psalms Commentary 37, 2, 16–20). Flusser has argued that *Perushim* in the Eighteen may be a reference to the Essenes—see Flusser, *Entdeckungen* pp. 119-121.

community which did not have a curse of *Nazûrim*, and the curse may have been inserted into the text represented by Schechter's Geniza fragment after 70 CE, despite the conservativeness shown in most of the wording of this version. If both of these were true, the curse of the *Nazûrim* might date from after 70 CE, though it is much more likely that it comes from before 70 CE.

It is therefore likely that an organised rejection of Christians within the synagogue commenced before 70 CE.<sup>48</sup> This does not mean that such rejection was universal or even necessarily widespread. As McCready has pointed out, the early synagogues were not part of a cohesive or united movement which acted in concert.<sup>49</sup> The vast majority of surviving manuscripts of the Eighteen lacks any reference to the *Nazûrim* and although such references may have been removed, there is no evidence that this has occurred. The evidence of the New Testament and Early Church Fathers is also patchy. Although anti-Christian letters from Jewish authorities in Jerusalem are mentioned,<sup>50</sup> and Paul met Jewish persecution in some cities, he also managed to preach in many synagogues, and even when he arrived in Rome, the Jews did not appear to be pre-warned about his heresy.<sup>51</sup> It would therefore appear that the curse of the *Nazûrim* was introduced only in some places and perhaps at different times, unlike the curse of the *Minim* which was promulgated by the highest central authority.

Many scholars have dated John's Gospel at the end of the first century or even later, on the assumption that it reflects the anti-Christian feelings engendered by the curse of the *Minim* or the *Nazûrim* or both.<sup>52</sup> The Johannine community appeared to experience expulsion from synagogue (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), which is exactly what one would expect as a result of this curse.<sup>53</sup> If the 'expulsions' were related to this curse, then we may surmise that John was

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<sup>48</sup> Steven T. Katz has argued very strongly against this conclusion in "Issues in the separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: a reconsideration", (*Journal of Biblical Literature* 103, 1984, 43-76). However, much of his argument is based on silence, saying that the Mishnah contains no mention of any official ban and that there is no specific mention of the curse of the *Nazûrim* by Christian apologists before Epiphanius and Jerome. However he does not take sufficient note of the complaints of Justin Martyr, does not mention *Nazareni* in Tertullian and he rules out New Testament evidence too glibly, saying that Paul's letters to Damascus are unhistorical, while John's Gospel exaggerated the synagogue's reaction and dates from after 70 CE.

<sup>49</sup> McCready, Wayne O., "Johannine self-understanding and the synagogue episode of John 9" in *Self-definition and self-discovery*; ed by D Hawkin, 1990, 147-166, esp. pp. 160-162.

<sup>50</sup> Letters to Damascus in the story of Paul (Acts 9.1ff; 22.5; 26.12). Justin Martyr says "you selected and sent out from Jerusalem chosen men through all the land to tell that the godless heresy of the Christians had sprung up, and to publish those things which all they who knew us not speak against us" (*Dialogue* 17.1).

<sup>51</sup> Act.28.21 says the Jews of Rome "have had no letters from Judaea, nor has any countrymen of ours arrived with any report or gossip to your discredit." If there had been any anti-Christian sentiment, Katz points out that Luke would have been the first to note it, as he does throughout Acts.

<sup>52</sup> This was suggested by Martyn, J. Louis, *History & theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) pp.15-21 and developed by C.K. Barrett (*The Gospel of John and Judaism*, translated from the German *Johannesevangelium und das Judentum* by D. M. Smith, London: SPCK, 1975, pp. 47f, 59-76) and is now very widely accepted. This is surveyed well in McCready, "Johannine self-understanding" esp. pp. 148f, 152-157.

<sup>53</sup> Katz has argued that there was no concept of excommunication from Judaism till the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, so John may merely reflect the strong feeling that they weren't welcome, as a result of this curse. ("Separation" pp.

writing from one of the areas where the curse of the *Nazirim* was introduced, or where they chose to extend the definition of *Minim* to Christians. Either of these could have occurred at any time during the latter half of the first century.

## **Conclusions**

The wording of the Eighteen before 70 CE cannot be fixed with any certainty, though Schechter's Geniza fragment appears to represent a very early stage in the development of the Palestinian version. The text as presented here, without some of the mistakes in previous editions, suggests that it is the oldest version which has survived. The strident emphasis on resurrection, including the archaic phrase 'in the twinkling of an eye', and the clear assumption that God resides in his Temple in Jerusalem, marks out this version as one which has conservatively preserved wording from before 70 CE.

It includes a curse of the Minim which is often assumed to be second century, but it is likely that Samuel the Lesser and possibly Simeon ha-Pakuli, who were attributed with composing the curse and fixing the number of benedictions at eighteen, lived in the time of Gamaliel I, before 70 CE, though it is also likely that these rulings were promulgated by the Sanhedrin at Jabneh under the leadership of Gamaliel II. The wording of the curse of the *Minim* appears to criticise the Sadducees for their rich lifestyle and for offering incense in the Temple in a wrong way, though it was later applied to all Jewish heretics.

The tradition about insertions into the Eighteen suggest that one early version contained a reference to the Perushin in benediction #12, which was probably inserted by the Sadducees. It also suggests that the word 'proselytes' was inserted into #13 while a reference to 'elders' was removed, though the significance of these changes is not known. The addition of Naziarim, which was directed at Christians, probably occurred before 70 ce, and became a test of orthodoxy in the post-70 synagogue.

The wording became progressively fixed, though there was still room for other changes for a long time. The various prayer book traditions contain many of these changes, but Schechter's Geniza fragment has been found to preserve several elements from before 70 CE.

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48-51) though William Horbury ("Extirpation and Excommunication") has shown that the LXX, Targum, Qumran documents and the NT all assume that excommunication takes place.