AMIDA (Berakha 12) Religious and Political Betrayal

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The ‘amida was composed around the Fifth Century BCE. Originally, the ‘amida was known as the *shemona ‘esre* (=eighteen) prayer, because it consisted of eighteen blessings. Around the year 100 ACE, with the advancement of Christianity, Shemuel haQatan composed a new berakha which was introduced to the ‘amida by Rabban Gamliel and its Court. This berakha is known as *birkat haminim*, the prayer in which we request God’s assistance to deal with those who wish to destroy Am Israel physically or spiritually. Particularly, the traitors among the Jewish people. But who qualifies for this shameful categorization? Is this berakha referring to a Jew who abandons Jewish observance? Absolutely not! Judaism is very understanding of Jews who, for different reasons fail to keeping the Mitsvot (*tinoq shenishba ben hagoyim*). Actually, we are encouraged to inspire all our brothers and sisters, and bring them closer to HaShem. We are commanded to love them and embrace them, not, God forbid, to ask for their destruction.

This Berakha is meant for two very specific types of “betrayal”.

1. Religious Treason (minim) which alludes to those Jews who abandon Judaism and now dedicate their efforts to proselyte and actively try to convert other Jews to their new beliefs (i.e., Jews for Jesus, etc.).
2. National Treason (malshinim) which refers to those Jews who join the political enemies of Israel. Think about Medinat Israel today, the nations who, like Amaleq, seek the destruction of Israel. Unfortunately, there are Jews who actively join these nations, movements or political parties, and align themselves with those seeking to wipe Israel off the map. A Jewish individual who does this, places himself or herself at a point beyond redemption. That is why we do not pray for their return. Because the damage they have done to Israel is beyond repair. We ask for God’s help to deal with them, because there is little we can do to defend ourselves against “our own brothers”.

Shabbat Shalom!

Candle lighting in NYC 5:20 pm
Shabbat ends in NYC 6:19 pm