

בְּרַכַּת הַמְּיַנִּים

Blessing of the Informers

The 12th prayer of the Shemonei Esrei (Eighteen Benedictions) was actually added later. It was officially added by Gamliel II, the grandson of Paul's mentor, having been composed by Shmuel HaKattan (*Berchot* 28b). It is based upon Psalm 104:36, "Let sins be consumed from the earth, And let the wicked be no more. Bless Adonai, O my soul. Praise Adonai!"

During the time of extreme persecution of the Jewish people under Titus (after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE), spies were sent into the circles of prayer in order to identify religious Jews and turn them into the Roman authorities. Some think that these spies were believers in Yeshua, but history does not bear this out. Rather, the spies were most likely Hellenistic Jews who had sided with the Roman government against the religious communities of their own people.

A story is told about this prayer and Rabbi Meir's experience. (Rabbi Meir lived around 160 CE). Some lawless men lived in Rabbi Meir's neighborhood. He suffered so much from them that one day he wished their death. His brilliant wife, Berurya, remarked to him, "How do you justify such a wish? Is it because you interpret the verse to mean 'let *sinner*s be terminated from the earth?' But the Hebrew does not read **הַזֵּאִים** (sinners) but **הַטְּאִים** (sins). Besides, the conclusion of the passage, 'and the wicked will be no more' implies that the first half of the verse is referring to sin itself. Pray on their behalf that they may repent so that the wicked will be no more." He prayed for them, and they repented of their evil ways.

This *berchah* is also based upon Judges 5:31, "Thus let all Your enemies perish, Adonai . . ." G-d's enemies are those who attempt to overturn His work and to keep His kingdom from being established on the earth.

To pray that G-d's enemies should be defeated is not contrary to the teachings of Yeshua. Surely He agrees with the inspired words of the Prophets and of the Psalms. Yet Yeshua also taught us: "love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). In this case Yeshua is speaking of those who are part of the community, but who, for one reason or another, are making life difficult for others. While they may be "enemies" in one sense, they are not G-d's enemies. The enemies of G-d whom the Psalmist prays against are those who are attempting to destroy His people. In this case it is appropriate to seek His protection and to ask Him to subdue His enemies.

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Psalm 104:36