

Instone-Brewer, David. "The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim before 70 C.E." *Journal of Theological Studies, NS*, Vol. 54, Pt. 1 (April 2003): 25-44.

In his article, "*The Eighteen Benedictions and the Minim before 70 C.E.*", David Instone-Brewer examines the Schechter Geniza fragment to further understand the timing and meaning of the Birkat Ha-Minim. Instone-Brewer concludes that the curse of the "minim", generally agreed to refer to early Christians and usually regarded as a later addition, actually had an earlier origin and was a criticism of the Sadducean priesthood, not Christians.

Instone-Brewer basis his paper on the precise text of the Geniza fragment of the Eighteen called the Schechter Geniza fragment. Brewer suggests that this is the oldest version of the Birkat Ha-Minim that has survived and has preserved wording from before 70 C.E. The Geniza fragment does include the curse of the "minim" which some assert is a second century addition. The majority of current scholarship consensus is that the "minim" referred to Christians because they are linked with the "Nazirim" (transliterated from the Greek text). Instead, Instone-Brewer suggests that the wording of the curse of the "minim" in the Geniza fragment appears to criticize the Sadducees for their rich lifestyle and for offering incense in the Temple in a wrong way. This applied to the Sadducees specifically when they were in charge of the High Priesthood.

Instone-Brewer argues from the text of the Genezi fragment that the "minim" is a general term for "heretic" in rabbinic literature. He concludes that the curse of the "minim", "may they instantly perish", was a carefully crafted exegetical criticism of the Sadducees, reminding them of God's judgment on the wicked who prosper and on those who offer incense wrongly.