

POWER PRAYERS – THE IMPACT OF TEFILLA

Background

It seems clear from Rashi that had the Jewish nation been fooled and *davened*, “HASHEM, save us from the Canaanim,” that *tefillah* wouldn’t have worked. However, they got wind of what the Amalekim were trying to do (namely, trick them and spoil their *tefillah*), so the Jewish nation *davened* without specifying which nation — “Save us from this nation.”

ספר במדבר פרק כא

(ב) וַיִּדַר יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶדָר לִידוּד וַיֹּאמֶר אִם נָתַן תַּתֵּן אֶת הָעָם הַזֶּה בְּיַדִּי וְהִחַרְמֹתִי אֶת עָרֵיהֶם

The Jewish nation made a vow saying, “If HASHEM will deliver this nation into our hands, we will consecrate their cities.”

רש"י על במדבר פרק כא פסוק א

יושב הנגב - זה עמלק שנאמר (במדבר יג) עמלק יושב בארץ הנגב ושנה את לשונו לדבר בלשון כנען כדי שיהיו ישראל מתפללים להקב"ה לתת כנענים בידם והם אינם כנענים ראו ישראל לבושיהם כלבושי עמלקים ולשונם לשון כנען אמרו נתפלל סתם שנאמר אם נתון תתן את העם הזה בידי

This refers to Amalek. Amalek changed their language to speak the language of the Canaanim in order to confuse Yisroel so that when they would daven, they would say to HASHEM, “Give over the Canaanim in our hands.” But they [the Amalekim] weren’t Canaanim. (Hence, the tefillah of Yisroel wouldn’t work.)

The Jewish nation saw that these people were wearing the clothing of the Amalek and speaking the language of the Canaanim. They said, “Let us daven without mentioning any nation.” That is why the verse says, “Give over this nation into our hands.”

Questions

Let’s say the Jewish Nation had davened incorrectly. Why wouldn’t HASHEM have answered their prayer anyway? After all, HASHEM is omniscient. He knows all, so surely He knew that they meant the Amalekim, even though they said Canaanim. And even more pointedly, HASHEM was right there with them on the battlefield, so what difference should it make if they used the right title or the wrong title? Either way, HASHEM knew exactly what they were referring to.