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Lesson/Sermon 1: The Friend at Midnight – Luke 11:5-8

Scripture:

Luke 11:5-8 (KJV): “And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”

Introduction:

This parable is a continuation of Yahoshuah’ teaching on prayer (Luke 11:1-4), emphasizing the importance of persistence and boldness in approaching Elohim. The parable of the Friend at Midnight teaches that if a reluctant friend can be persuaded by persistence, how much more will a loving Father respond to the persistent prayers of His children!

Main Points:

1. The Situation: A Friend in Need (Luke 11:5-6)

- The parable begins with a man who unexpectedly receives a guest late at night. Hospitality was a sacred duty in Jewish culture, and the man is embarrassed because he has no food to offer.
- This man has a desperate need. He turns to his friend at midnight, asking for three loaves of bread.

- The lesson here is that, like the man, we will often find ourselves in desperate situations with nothing to give—whether it is wisdom, strength, or material needs. Our natural response should be to go to Elohim with our needs.

2. The Reluctant Friend (Luke 11:7)

- The friend responds negatively at first: “Don’t bother me; the door is shut, and my children are with me in bed.” This reflects an inconvenience and an unwillingness to be disturbed.

- However, Yahoshuah’s point is to contrast this reluctant friend with Elohim, who is never inconvenienced by our prayers. If even a friend will eventually respond, how much more will Elohim, who is neither reluctant nor selfish, answer our cries!

3. The Power of Importunity (Luke 11:8)

- The key word here is “importunity” (persistent boldness or shameless audacity). This man kept knocking and asking until the friend finally got up and gave him as much as he needed.

- The lesson is that persistent prayer moves Elohim. We must approach Him boldly and persistently, just as Hebrews 4:16 says, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

4. Application:

- Yahoshuah follows the parable with a direct command in Luke 11:9: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The Greek tense indicates continuous action: keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking.

- Supporting Scriptures:

- **James 5:16: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”**

- **1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.”**

The distinction between persistent prayer and repetitive prayer is crucial in understanding how to approach Elohim effectively. While they may seem similar on the surface, the underlying attitude, intent, and outcome are fundamentally different. Yahoshuah addressed both concepts in His teachings, highlighting the importance of persistent prayer while cautioning against vain repetitions. Let’s explore this distinction biblically.

1. Defining Persistent Prayer:

Persistent prayer is a continual and earnest approach to Elohim, characterized by faith, perseverance, and unwavering dependence on Him. It involves repeatedly bringing your requests

before Elohim, not because you doubt His willingness to answer, but because you trust Him and rely on Him for the outcome. Persistence in prayer flows from a deep relationship with Elohim and a confidence that He will respond according to His will.

- Biblical Examples of Persistent Prayer:

1. The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8):

- In this parable, a man persistently knocks on his friend's door at midnight, asking for bread to feed his guest. Although the friend is initially reluctant, he responds because of the man's "importunity" (persistent boldness).

- Yahoshuah uses this story to teach us to keep asking, seeking, and knocking (Luke 11:9), showing that persistent prayer is not about repetition for the sake of it but perseverance out of necessity and dependence.

2. The Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8):

- In the parable of the Persistent Widow, a woman continually approaches an unjust judge, pleading for justice against her adversary. Despite the judge's lack of fear of Elohim or respect for people, he grants her request because of her relentless persistence.

- Yahoshuah introduces this parable with the phrase: "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). Persistence in prayer is encouraged as an expression of faith that Elohim, unlike the unjust judge, is willing and just to answer.

3. Yahoshuah in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46):

- Yahoshuah prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking the Father to let the cup of suffering pass from Him. His repeated prayers were not empty repetitions but an expression of His genuine anguish and dependence on the Father's will.

- This shows that persistence is about maintaining communication and reliance on Elohim, even in distress.

- Key Characteristics of Persistent Prayer:

- Faith: Persistent prayer is rooted in faith and a trust that Elohim hears and will respond (Hebrews 11:6).

- Relationship: It flows from a deep relationship with Elohim, not a formulaic approach (James 5:16).

- Purposeful Repetition: The repetition in persistent prayer has purpose—to express dependence, to persevere in faith, and to align with Elohim’s will.

- Supporting Scripture:

- **1 Thessalonians 5:17:** “Pray without ceasing.” This command indicates continual prayer, a persistent attitude of prayer throughout life.

- **Colossians 4:2:** “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” Persistence is accompanied by thanksgiving and alertness.

2. Defining Repetitive Prayer:

Repetitive prayer, on the other hand, refers to empty, meaningless repetitions that lack sincerity and genuine faith. It is characterized by a mechanical, ritualistic approach, where the focus is more on quantity than quality. Repetitive prayers often stem from a misunderstanding of Elohim’s nature, treating Him as though He is distant and can be manipulated by the number of words or repetitions used.

- Yahoshuah’s Warning Against Vain Repetitions:

- **Matthew 6:7 (KJV):** “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

- Yahoshuah is not condemning all forms of repetition but vain repetitions—empty phrases and words repeated without heart engagement, similar to the babbling of pagans who thought that repeating words would compel their Elohim to act.

- The phrase “vain repetitions” translates from the Greek *battalogo*, meaning “to stammer” or “babble.” It suggests speaking without thought or meaning.

- Example of Repetitive Prayer:

- The Prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:26-29):

- The prophets of Baal prayed for hours, calling on their Elohim and repeating, “O Baal, hear us!” They shouted, danced, and even cut themselves, thinking that these rituals would compel Baal to respond.

- Elijah, by contrast, offered a simple, heartfelt prayer to the Elohim of Israel, and Elohim answered immediately with fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38).

- Characteristics of Repetitive Prayer:

- Mechanical and Formulaic: It relies on formulas, rituals, or superstitious repetition rather than on faith.

- **Lacks Sincerity:** The heart is not engaged; it is focused on the act of prayer rather than on relationship with Elohim.

- Manipulative Attitude: It views Elohim as needing to be persuaded or compelled by the sheer volume of words.

- Supporting Scripture:

- **Ecclesiastes 5:2 (KJV):** “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before Elohim: for Elohim is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”

- This verse emphasizes the need for thoughtful, reverent prayer rather than mechanical repetition.

3. Key Differences Between Persistent and Repetitive Prayer:

 Persistent Prayer	 Repetitive Prayer
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Rooted in faith and relationship with Elohim	Rooted in ritualism or manipulation
Reflects trust and dependence on Elohim nature	Reflects a lack of understanding of Elohim’s
Meaningful repetition that aligns with Elohim’s will	Meaningless repetition for the sake of
words	
Perseveres with the expectation of Elohim’s timing	Repeats with the expectation that words
alone will force a response	
Involves heartfelt petitions	Involves mindless babbling

4. Biblical Application:

The Bible encourages believers to be persistent in prayer while warning against empty repetition. The goal of persistent prayer is to align our hearts with Elohim’s will, express our dependence on Him, and persevere until His answer comes. Repetitive prayer, however, is a warning to avoid the ritualistic, formulaic mindset that believes Elohim is manipulated by the quantity of words rather than by the quality of our relationship and faith.

- Yahoshuah’s Model Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13):

- Right after warning against vain repetitions, Yahoshuah gives the Lord's Prayer as a model. It is concise, heartfelt, and focused on Elohim's glory and will, rather than on repetitive words.

- Paul's Persistence (2 Corinthians 12:7-9):

- Paul prayed three times for the removal of the "thorn in the flesh," showing persistence. Elohim did not grant his request but answered with, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul's persistence led to an understanding of Elohim's will, not vain babbling.

5. Conclusion:

Persistent prayer is a powerful, faith-filled pursuit of Elohim, grounded in trust and relationship. Repetitive prayer, by contrast, is a shallow ritual devoid of faith and understanding. Yahoshuah encourages us to "pray always and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1) while avoiding the mechanical repetition of empty phrases. Approach Elohim with boldness, perseverance, and sincerity, believing that He hears and responds to the prayers of His children according to His perfect will.

Elohim is not like the reluctant friend; He is a loving Father who delights in answering His children's prayers. Therefore, we should approach Him with bold persistence, knowing that He will respond according to His perfect will and timing.