

- “But Yeshua says to them, ‘I am. Don’t be afraid’” (TLV).

With various Tanach themes in play, ranging from the Sinai theophany of God revealing Himself as the “I am” (Exodus 3:14) to the deliverance of Ancient Israel through the Red Sea (Exodus 12-14; Psalm 77:16, 19-20; 107:29-30), John 6:20 should be rendered along the lines of, “But He said to them, ‘I AM; do not be afraid’” (PME). Yeshua speaking “I am” while walking on the Sea of Galilee, and then seeing the boat with His Disciples immediately transported to the shore, serves as excellent proof of Him being integrated into the Divine Identity. At the same time, there are more uses of *egō eimi* which will be appearing in the Gospel of John, which require our attention.

John 6:26-40

“Yeshua is the Bread of Life”

“Yeshua answered them and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.’ Therefore they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?’ Yeshua answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’ So they said to Him, ‘What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, “HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT” [Exodus 16:15; Numbers 11:7-9; Nehemiah 9:15]. Yeshua then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’ Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, always give us this bread.’ Yeshua said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.’”

The day after crossing over to Capernaum, a crowd gathered to hear Him, including a number who had traveled from Tiberias by boat (John 5:21-25). As He sees the crowd, Yeshua lets them know, “you’re not looking for me because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the bread and had all you wanted!” (John 6:26, CJB/CJSB). Was the multitude really interested in seeing Yeshua demonstrate miracles of healing the sick (John 6:2) or of casting out demons—or instead Yeshua providing them with a great banquet (John 6:5-14)? While many of the people who sought out Yeshua had some legitimate needs in terms of sustenance, what Yeshua offered was far more than food for the stomach.

Already, those who had been present earlier at his feeding of five thousand had recognized Yeshua to be a Prophet: “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (John 6:14). Yeshua, however, details to the crowd how He is the one who will provide them with a food which cannot perish or spoil, which only He as the Son of Man—the One to whom all Creation must pay homage (cf. Daniel 7:13-14)—can provide. The Messiah says, “Don’t work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on Him, God the Father has put the seal of approval” (John 6:27, TLV). The crowd asks Him, “What must we do, that we may work the works of God?” (John 6:28, American Standard Version), rightly taken to mean, “What must we do to do the works God

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requires?" (NIV). Yeshua tells them, "This is the work of God, to trust in the One He sent" (John 6:29, TLV).

That the multitude is focused on seeing not just a sign performed by Yeshua, but that they might be fed again, is something that they direct His attention to. Not only does the crowd ask for a sign to be performed, but they appeal to the Ancient Israelites in the wilderness being fed by God via manna:

"They said therefore to Him, 'What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What do You work? Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT" [Exodus 16:15; Numbers 11:7-9; Nehemiah 9:15]'" (John 6:30-31, PME).

Various quotations are made from the Scriptures, slightly paraphrased by the CJB/CJSB, "as it says in the *Tanakh*, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (John 6:30). While the crowd assembled around Yeshua expects Him to provide them with physical sustenance—perhaps having not listened carefully to His word about not working for the "food that spoils" (John 6:27, TLV)—Yeshua corrects them, in getting them to recognize that the true bread did not come from Moses in the wilderness, but from His Heavenly Father: "Yes, indeed! I tell you it wasn't Moshe who gave you the bread from heaven. But my Father is giving you the genuine bread from heaven" (John 6:32, CJB/CJSB). The verb *didōmi* (δίδωμι) appears twice in John 6:32, first as the perfect active indicative *dedōken* (δέδωκεν) or "gave," and then secondly as the present active indicative *didōsin* (δίδωσιν): "Moses gave...My Father gives..." The provision of manna to the Ancient Israelites, as important as it was, was a past and completed action; the provision of "the true bread out of/from Heaven," *ton arton ek tou ouranou ton alēthinon* (τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸν ἀληθινόν), is a present action. Moses did not provide the bread which offers people eternal life. Yeshua further describes, "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (John 6:33, RSV), with *ho katabainōn* (ὁ καταβαίνων) notably rendered in some versions as "He/the One who comes down" (NKJV, HCSB; also ESV) or "the One coming down" (TLV).

Much of the crowd, at least recognizing Yeshua as a significant figure, perhaps even a prophet, starts to seemingly realize that He is presenting them something that their ancestors did not have. Most importantly, though, the crowd recognizes that the bread from Heaven is something that they need: "They said therefore to Him, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread'" (John 6:34, NASB). What follows is a significant statement:

"I am the bread which is life! Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever trusts in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35, CJB/CJSB).

Within the source text of John 6:35, it is communicated *egō eimi ho artos tēs zōēs* (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς), and as such it is widely recognized how "I am" does have a connection back to the theophany of Mount Sinai in Exodus 3:14. Various examiners of the Gospel of John are in agreement that John 6:35, appearing with a predicate in "I AM the bread of life" (PME), is the first of seven such statements (also John 6:48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5) that to weigh with Exodus 3:14.¹¹⁴ Burge directs, "there are seven places in the Gospel where Jesus provides a clear predicate noun to describe himself, and they take on features that sound like solemn pronouncements...In each of these sayings Jesus is taking a motif from Judaism (often in the context of a miracle or major festival discourse) and reinterpreting it for himself. He now supplies that which Judaism sought in its activities and stories."¹¹⁵ Moses offered limited manna to the Ancient Israelites, but Yeshua offers unlimited sustenance in Himself.

¹¹⁴ Morris, *John*, 365; Carson, *John*, 289; Milne, 111; Kruse, *John*, 170; Köstenberger, 210.

¹¹⁵ Burge, *John*, 199.

It is easy to recognize that Yeshua's nature is deeply intertwined with the nature of the God of Israel, by Yeshua making the claim "I am the bread of life." As Yeshua is the bread of life, He asserts how "He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (NIV). These are qualities witnessed of the LORD God or YHWH in the Tanach:

"They will not hunger or thirst, nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; for He who has compassion on them will lead them and will guide them to springs of water" (Isaiah 49:10).

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

While those who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity would conclude that *egō eimi ho artos tēs zōēs* serves as strong evidence of this, it cannot go unnoticed how some have compared the claim of Yeshua in John 6:35 to that of the figure Wisdom. As it is witnessed, the figure of Wisdom bids people to come to her, so that they might be fed and nourished:

"Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my produce. For the remembrance of me is sweeter than honey, and my inheritance sweeter than the honeycomb. Those who eat me will hunger for more, and those who drink me will thirst for more" (Sirach 24:19-21).

Thematically, it is not difficult to see that the figure of Wisdom, a created intermediary force mainly representing virtue and integrity, would bid people to come to her—and that Yeshua's words in John 6:35 bear a similar intention. But it is not in the area of Wisdom and Yeshua both providing spiritual sustenance to people that is the problem; the problem is that the sustenance that Wisdom offers is of limited supply. Keener properly indicates, "Jesus is greater than Wisdom, for Wisdom promises that those who eat and drink from her will hunger and thirst for more (Sir 24:21), whereas Jesus emphasizes instead that one who comes to and believes in him will never hunger or thirst for anything else. When one follows Jesus, one gets all that is available."¹¹⁶

Having made the declaration "I am the bread of life," with John 6:35 deliberately employing *egō eimi*, Yeshua informs the multitude, "But as I told you, you've seen Me, and yet you do not believe" (John 6:36, HCSB), indicating that they have encountered the Messiah but do not trust in what He offers. Nevertheless, while the people here who have seen the Messiah, seen His miracles, and heard His teachings lack faith, Yeshua is not going to turn anyone away from Him. He says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37, NIV). Rather than driving them away, the Lamb in Revelation 7:16-17 is seen as the One who guides the faithful to the water of life, a paralleling function to that previously noted from Isaiah 49:10:

"They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

Surely, a number of people in the audience, when hearing Yeshua say "I am the bread of life," and that those who place their trust in Him will never hunger or thirst—could make a number of thematic connections with what is said of the God of Israel in the Tanach. Indeed, the further dialogue which will follow in John 6:41-59, records how a number of the Jews

¹¹⁶ Keener, *John*, 683.

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present, were upset about what Yeshua had said. However, rather than act as some crazy person, claiming a supernatural nature by usurping the place of the God of Israel—Yeshua’s identity as One who can state “I am the bread of life,” is predicated on Him being the Son sent from the Heavenly Father. He tells the crowd, “For I have come down from heaven to do not my own will but the will of the One who sent me” (John 6:38, CJB/CJSB). Yeshua, the obedient Son sent from Heaven, performs the tasks assigned to Him by His Heavenly Father.

Yeshua indeed has an important mission to perform, which extends to the eschaton and beyond: “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:39, ESV). While there are soteriological questions posited here, more important Christological questions are posited by the Messiah’s claim, “raise it up on the last day.” Yeshua further states, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and trusts in Him may have eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40, TLV). This repeats words that Yeshua has already spoken (John 5:25), but more importantly poses something not to be overlooked. *Why is Yeshua the One who is going to raise the dead?* It would not have been out of place for the Messiah to say something along the lines of, “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and My Father will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40, NASU modified). *If Yeshua were a supernatural yet ultimately created being, would He have the power and authority to initiate the future resurrection of the dead?* While there can be no doubting that John 6:26-40 includes statements of agency on behalf of the Messiah, there can also be no doubting that Yeshua’s identity is deeply intertwined and interconnected with that of the God of Israel.

John 6:41-59

“Yeshua is the Living Bread from Heaven”

“Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread that came down out of heaven.’ They were saying, ‘Is not this Yeshua, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, “I have come down out of heaven?”’ Yeshua answered and said to them, ‘Do not grumble among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, “AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD” [Isaiah 54:13]. Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.’ Then the Jews *began* to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us *His* flesh to eat?’ So Yeshua said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.’ These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.”

Yeshua offers some rather compelling teachings in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:59), which creates consternation on the part of the local religious leaders. As the Goodspeed New Testament renders John 6:40, “The Jews complained of him for saying, ‘I am the bread that has come out of heaven,’” with the Montgomery New Testament having, “Then the Jews