

Yeshua's "I am [he]" Statements

Before Abraham Was, I Am - Pt. 1

Response to Torah Resource - Pt. 6

Opening Text: John 8:57-58

It's good to be back here in the pulpit today to study the Bible with you all (it seems like a long time, but it's only been 2 weeks...), and that's what we will be doing today and tomorrow: **Bible study**. So I hope you brought your Bibles, your lexicons, your highlighters, and maybe some coffee. Hopefully we will learn some things together that we may not have understood before, or either progress more in an understanding we already have.

We are going to be looking at some texts in John's Gospel in these next two lessons, and I will be teaching a detailed explanation of John 8:58, the famous "before Abraham was I am" text. The reason we are going to John 8 is because this was a text brought up last fall on the Rob and Caleb Show on Torah Resource Radio.

I've been taking my time, carefully answering everything they brought up about how I (and others) believe, and the book I co-authored, and I've come to the point now where they bring up John 8:58. I'd like to read **John 8:48-59** to get our minds flowing in that direction. I'm reading this from the New American Standard Bible. I'll be using the NASB in these two messages seeing it is considered to be one of the, if not THE most scholarly, literal translation of the English Bible today.

48 The Judahites answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

49 Yeshua answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

50 "But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51 "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death."

52 The Judahites said to Him, "Now we know that

You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and

You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'

53 "Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?

The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?"

54 Yeshua answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God ';

55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

57 So the Judahites said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

58 Yeshua said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Yeshua hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Before going any further here, let's take a look at a clip from the show where they deal with John 8:58. It's around 5 minutes total.

Okay... Let me begin by saying that I corresponded with Rob Vanhoff (the gentleman on the screen to your right) back in December of 2014 about this text in John 8. I did so by way of a blog post and through email. The first thing I said to him concerning this text (and his comments on a portion of the book I co-authored) was that the majority of the section in the book (I co-authored) that dealt with John 8 was penned by my friend and co-author, John Cordaro. To Rob's defense, he did not know that, and that is fine. He dealt with what was the most written about in the book.

However, towards the end of chapter 5 in our book (the chapter dealing with John 8:58) I give an alternate understanding, one different from John Cordaro. John and I understand the text differently, and in the book we published John's understanding first, and mentioned mine more in passing. Looking back now, I wished we would have published both understandings (in detail). My understanding of John 8:58 is mentioned briefly on pages 63-64 of our book. In my initial correspondence with Rob back on December 2 (2014), I summed up my understanding of the text like this:

"I personally believe Yeshua was speaking spiritually or figuratively in John 8:58 meaning "before Abraham was, I am he (the Messiah)." He had just spoke of Abraham seeing his day in verse 56. Seeing whose day? Seeing the day of the Messiah, by faith. After this the Jewish leaders were upset still thinking in the natural or literal. They said, "You're not yet 50 years old. Have you seen Abraham?" Yeshua's response in verse 58 is him speaking of himself as the Messiah in the plan/logos of the Father from the foundation of the world, or - at the very most - the passage could speak of him as having pre-human existence. There's nothing in the text that proves Yeshua is claiming to be YHWH. People often base that on the reaction of the Jewish leaders (which their intent is not specifically spelled out anyhow), but we should base our understanding of the text on the words of Yeshua. The Jewish leaders could have misunderstood him and reacted inappropriately as they did at other times (like in John 6 when he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood)."

So, that's how I summed my view up to Rob back in December. Although there are other ways, perhaps better ways, the text could be translated from the Greek, I believe a good reading or translation of the text of John 8:58 is "Before Abraham was born (came into existence), I am he." The "I am he" Yeshua is referring to is "I am the Messiah/Son of Man/Son of God." Yeshua is this before Abraham, either in a literal pre-existence or in the plan/logos of Yahweh. I lean more towards in the logos (or **as** the logos) of the Father. Now, let's begin to go deeper here.

For the most part, people whom I have heard teach on or just comment about John 8:58 automatically link it up with Exodus 3:14. They say that Yeshua says "before Abraham was, I am" and then they go to where Yahweh says (Exodus 3:14) "I am that I am" in the King James Version of the Bible.

It is true that many and various verses in the Bible are parallel with one another. For example, many of the New Testament authors quote passages out of the Old Testament. When you have a direct quote of an Old Testament passage in the New Testament, you have parallel verses. What I mean is this. You have verses that are associated or related with one another.

At the same time, just because verses sound similar in English, doesn't automatically mean that are related to one another. I actually **do not** believe John 8:58 is related to Exodus 3:14. When Yeshua said "Before Abraham was born, I am" I do not believe he was quoting Exodus 3:14 or even alluding to Exodus 3:14. But, many Bible translators do. Let me show you how certain Bible translations treat this text.

The NLT reads, "Yeshua answered, 'I tell you the truth, before Abraham was I AM!' (notice they capitalize the "I am") Then, in their footnote on this verse they say, "see Exodus 3:14."

The AMP version capitalizes I AM and then puts in parenthesis [Exodus 3:14].

The NAB also capitalizes I AM.

The Good News Translation actually puts extra quotation marks around "I Am." So it looks like this, Yeshua replied, "Before Abraham was born, 'I Am'." I assume that they do this because they are implying that by saying 'I Am' Yeshua is quoting in his statement, Exodus 3:14.

It is then said by a good many pastors and scholars that the Greek text of John 8:58 reads "ego eimi" and when we compare this with the Greek Septuagint text of Exodus 3:14, it likewise reads (and has Yahweh saying in Greek) "ego eimi." And... it is true that the Greek Septuagint text of Exodus 3:14 does have "ego eimi" in it. But... that is not the focal point of Yahweh's statement in Exodus 3:14, in the Septuagint. Let me explain.

I own the Brenton translation of the Septuagint, and I have it with me tonight if you'd like to take a look at it. In Exodus 3:14 it reads thusly: "And God spoke to Moses saying I am THE BEING; and he said, Thus shall ye say to the children of Israel, THE BEING has sent me to you." (The Greek text is underneath on the screen, as you see.)

Now, in this English translation of the Septuagint, what is Yahweh emphasizing himself as? **The Being**, (ho ohn, in Greek) correct. The words "I am" (ego eimi) are simply a setting up (a helper in identification) for what Yahweh is calling himself in Exodus 3:14. He says in Greek "ego eimi ho ohn." And then he says again "ho ohn (the being) has sent me to you."

So in the Greek text of Exodus 3:14 Yahweh is not calling himself "I AM." The words "I am" are only a pre-cursor to what Yahweh is calling himself - "I am THE BEING."

To make this simpler let me give a modern day example. Let's say me and my family were in a crowd of 50 people and someone asked Morgen, "Who is your dad?" and I heard them and replied "I am her dad" ... what is the significant title I place upon myself? It's the word "dad" not the words "I am." I am are only words that help me lead up to who I am - her dad. That's what Yahweh is doing in Exodus 3:14 in the Greek Septuagint.

He does not say (in the Greek) "I am I AM" but rather "I am THE BEING."

In Greek = *Ego Eimi Ho Ohn*.

I said before that many pastors and scholars link John 8:58 with Exodus 3:14, but I did not say all of them do. For example, Greek Scholar Jason David BeDuhn from Northern Arizona University in his book "Truth in Translation" page 108 says this:

"God does not say 'I am I AM,' he says 'I am the being.' 'I am' sets up the title or identification God uses of himself, it is not itself that title. Separating 'I am' off as if it were meant to stand alone is an interpretive sleight-of-hand, totally distorting the role the phrase plays in the whole sentence, either in the Greek Septuagint version of Exodus 3:14 or in John 8:58. There is absolutely nothing in the original Greek of John 8:58 to suggest that Jesus is quoting the Old Testament here, contrary to what the Today's English Version tries to suggest by putting quotation marks around 'I am.'"

There are also other scholars who have veered away from linking John 8:58 with Exodus 3:14 because of recognizing the dissimilarity between the two texts in Greek.

As a matter of fact, when you study the text of Exodus 3:14 in the Hebrew, you will find that many scholars believe the Hebrew phrase "ehyeh asher ehyeh" is better translated into English as "I will be what I will be" not "I am that I am." If you read the KJV, you will notice that in Exodus 3:12 Yahweh tells Moses "Certainly I will be with thee." That phrase "I will be" in Exodus 3:12 is "ehyeh" so even the translators there find it acceptable to translate the Hebrew into English as "I will be."

There are English Bible Versions that translate Ex3:14 from Hebrew to English as "I will be what I will be." They include The Bible in Living English, Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, and The Five Books of Moses (by Everett Fox). There are even more translations that although they read "I am that I am" in Ex3:14 give a footnote to the verse saying that "I will be what I will be" is a legitimate alternate rendering. One example I've placed on the screen is from the Common English Bible. It reads "I am who I am" in Ex3:14, but in a footnote to the verse it says, "or I will be who I will be."

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (V2, pages 507 and 1254) gives these reasons why "I will be" is preferred in Ex3:14 rather than "I am."

I will be who/what I will be... is preferable because the verb hayah [to be] has a more dynamic sense of being, **not pure existence, but becoming, happening, being present** - and because the historical and theological context of these early chapters of Exodus shows that God is revealing to Moses, and subsequently to the whole people, not the inner nature of His being [or existence], **but his active, redemptive intentions on their behalf. He 'will be' to them 'what His deeds will show Him 'to be.'** ...In Ex3:14 Jehovah is explained as equivalent to 'ehyeh, which is a short form of 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh, translated in RV 'I am that I.' ...the imperfect 'ehyeh is more accurately translated 'I will be what I will be,' a Semetic idiom meaning, 'I will be all that is necessary as the occasion will arise,' a familiar OT idea.

The point is here that Ex3:14 probably shouldn't read "I am that I am" to begin with. If the more proper translation of "I will be what I will be" was there no one would make a link between John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14 to begin with.

So how should we understand John 8:58? I would suggest that we first look at the totality of John's Gospel and see if there are any other places in that book where Yeshua uses the words "ego eimi, and where the words appear in John's Gospel even outside of the person of Yeshua. Then we should obviously study the entire context of John chapter 8 leading up to the climax in verses 58-59.

This all will give us a handle on how the phrase is used by this particular author in this particular writing.

So that's what we are going to do. We'll begin by going to John 4 because in John 4 we have the first use of the Greek "ego eimi" (I am) by Yeshua in the Gospel of John. This is the account where Yeshua speaks to a woman of Samaria, often known as the "woman at the well." We'll begin in verse 19.

19The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

20 "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

21Yeshua said to

her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

22 "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Judahites.

23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

24 "the Almighty is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

25The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us."

26 Yeshua said to her, "**I** who speak to you **am He**."

Notice verse 26 where Yeshua uses the phrase "I am he." In Greek this is the phrase "ego eimi," (same as John 8:58), but the translators of the NASB add the word "he" to the end of "I am" because in the sentence there is no predicate noun.

Don't let that phrase "predicate noun" scare you away from learning. What that means is that there is no noun describing who the "I am" is in Yeshua's statement here in John 4. It's not like other statements Yeshua makes in the Gospel of John where he says,

"I am ---> the light of the world" (John 8:12) [or]

"I am ---> the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

In both of those cases there is a predicate noun, either "light of the world" or "good shepherd." Therefore there is no reason to insert the "he" after "I am" because the noun is supplied in the sentence.

In the case of John 4:26, Yeshua does not add such a noun, so the translators correctly insert the "he" after the statement "I am."

Now, who is Yeshua referring to himself as when he says "I am he"? Look at John 4:25-26 again, by itself.

25 The woman said to Him, "I know that **Messiah is coming** (He who is called Christ); **when that One comes, He will** declare all things to us."

26 Yeshua said to her, "**I** who speak to you **am He**."

It's very plain isn't it? Yeshua is saying that he is *the Messiah* the woman of Samaria is talking about. John records Yeshua as saying "ego eimi" and this **first use** of "ego eimi" (I am) by Yeshua in John's Gospel is a reference to him being the Messiah, the anointed one, the sent one, of Yahweh.

Now, John 4:26 certainly isn't John 8:58, but don't miss that it is the Gospel of John (same author), and in both texts it is Yeshua speaking.

Let's look at another one (without the predicate noun) in John 6:16-21.

16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,

17 and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Yeshua had not yet come to them.

18 The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.

19 Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Yeshua walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.

20 But He said to them, "**It is I**; do not be afraid."

21 So they were willing to receive Him into the boat,
and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Here in verse 20, John records Yeshua as again using the phrase "ego eimi," only this time it is easy for us to miss it because the translators of the NASB translate the phrase as "It is I." Most translations translate this as "It is I" here because they understand that Yeshua is simply telling his disciples "It's me, Yeshua, don't be afraid." I believe that is an excellent translation, because he's identifying himself as Yeshua to his disciples rather than being some-thing or some-one else. This is an excellent example of Bible translators not inserting a meaning that is foreign to the text, into the text.

So here in John 6:20, "ego eimi" functions as an identifier for the Master telling his disciples, "It is I (Yeshua)" or "It is I (the Messiah)."

Let's look at a couple more like this (without the predicate noun) in John 8:24 and 28. We will begin by reading John 8:17-18. Take note that we are entering the John 8 context here, where Yeshua is speaking with a crowd.

17 "Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true.

18 "**I am He** who testifies about Myself, **and the Father** who sent Me testifies about Me."

Before we go further (to the main verses I want to get to [24 and 28]) look at verse 18. Yeshua says, "I am he (that's ego eimi in Greek) who testifies about myself." He's identifying himself as one of the two witnesses he is speaking of.

What is important to note here is that Yeshua's use of "ego eimi" in no way is referring to himself as the Father, because he mentions the Father who sent him in the next statement as the second witness! In other words:

1. Yeshua says "I am he" (the first witness)
2. and the Father who sent me (is the second witness)

I actually didn't even catch this use of *ego eimi* by Yeshua when I first put these sermon notes together. It was in my second time going through my notes that I noticed this use in verse 18. (Don't miss also that Yeshua refers to he and his father as TWO, not one here. This should help us understand that later in John where Yeshua says "I and my Father are one" that is a reference to one in purpose, plan, unity, else it contradicts this text here.)

Let's continue reading in verse 19.

19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Yeshua answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."

20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

- 21 Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."
- 22 So the Judahites were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come '?"
- 23 And He was saying to them, "You are from below, **I am from above**; you are of this world, **I am not of this world**."
- 24 "**Therefore** I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that **I am He**, you will die in your sins."
- 25 So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Yeshua said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?"
- 26 "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."
- 27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.
- 28 So Yeshua said, "When you lift up **the Son of Man**, then you will know that **I am He**, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me."
- 29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."
- 30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

Now this is a very interesting text because I have heard John 8:24 preached or spoken about many, many times in my life, and used to say that unless you believe that Jesus is God (Yeshua is Yahweh) you will die in your sins.

I was listening to a man talk about John 8:24 one time and as he quoted the text he said Yeshua was saying "Unless you believe I (pointing to himself) am he (pointing to heaven) you will die in your sins." Now, I'm not sure if he meant to say that Yeshua used those hand gestures when he made this statement, but that's what this preacher's hand gestures implied. This preacher was a Oneness preacher who believed that God the Father wrapped himself in a robe of flesh and became Jesus.

This is where we must be careful. We shouldn't be afraid of the text. We shouldn't be afraid of what Yeshua says. But, we should be careful to properly interpret what Yeshua is saying by the context of his own statements. **I say this because** we are dealing with the subject of people dying in their sins unless they believe something about Yeshua. We don't want to pronounce that kind of judgment on people flippantly. This is very serious.

The first thing I want to point out is how the NASB translates "ego eimi" here in both verse 24 and verse 28. They translate this into English as "I am he" and not just "I am" - why? Once again, as in John 4:26 and John 6:20 there exists no predicate noun in the statement so the "he" is supplied to make sense of the sentence. Keep this in your mind as we move along in John 8.

The question before us now is this: who is Yeshua saying we must believe he is in John 8:24? Well, first, let's look a few verses back in this same chapter. We just read 8:17-30, now let's read some of the verses before this in John 8:12-16.

12 Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, "**I am the Light of the world**; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true."

14 Yeshua answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

15 "You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.

16 "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. *(and here is where he mentions he and his Father as the two witnesses according to the law)*

How does Yeshua identify himself in this John 8 context? Well, here in verse 12 we find the phrase "ego eimi" again, but this time there is a predicate noun/phrase attached to it so the translators leave out the "he." Yeshua says "I am ---> the light of the world." Just a few moments after he says this he tells them "Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

It's no stretch to believe Yeshua is saying "Unless you believe I am <the light of the world> you will die in your sins." He then says in verse 14 "I know where I came from and where I am going." Then he says in verse 23 "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." These are some powerful statements. I know WHERE I CAME FROM. I am FROM ABOVE, NOT OF THIS WORLD.

These are some of the verses that people who believe in the literal pre-existence of Yeshua use to refer to Yeshua as the logos or the pre-existent Son of Yahweh. However you interpret pre-existence, I just want you to take note that Yeshua says these things right before he says "Unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." He has said nothing about him being Yahweh or the Father up to this point in John 8. That is not his point in John 8:24 when he says "Unless you believe that I am he."

But... there's more. We read it moments ago, but on down in John 8:28 we read:

28 So Yeshua said, "When you lift up **the Son of Man**, then you will know that **I am He**, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

Now, this seems very plain to me. "When you lift up the Son of Man then you will know that I am he.

So Yeshua has identified himself as the "light of the world" "from above" "not of this world" and the "Son of Man." I believe all of these titles are related with one another.

Remember with me to a previous lesson in this series where I dealt extensively with the phrase Son of Man in the book of Daniel 7. This is the chapter where the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days and he (the Son of Man) is given authority, glory, and a kingdom. The Son of Man is not the Ancient of Days, but is a viceroy or vice-regent to the Ancient of Days. The Son of Man is Yeshua. This is the text that Yeshua was referring back to when he called himself the Son of Man.

Son of Man is a title that is associated with the promised Messiah. One of the clearest examples of this is in the gospel of Matthew 16:13-18 where Yeshua DOES NOT ask the question "Whom do men say that I am?" It's quoted like that sometimes, but the more correct quote is this: "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?"

See, when Yeshua asks the question about his identity, he goes ahead and gives himself the title "Son of man" (I believe) referring to Daniel 7:13-14. Of course we know Peter shortly thereafter answers his question correctly by saying that "You are the Messiah, Son of the living Elohim." Son of Man is linked with being the Messiah, Son of Yahweh.

Even right here in the Gospel of John we find the same association. In John 3:14 Yeshua says, "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of man must be lifted up." He goes on in the next verses (15-16) to speak of himself as the only begotten Son of Elohim, the Son that Yahweh Elohim gave us. Notice again, Son of man and Son of Elohim are linked.

I believe this is who Yeshua is saying we must believe he is in John 8:24, according to the very context of the surrounding verses in John 8 that come before and after verse 24. The light of the world, the one from above, the one not of this world, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh. This will be seen oh so clearly if we allow the context to speak rather than trying to force fit a theological presupposition into the text. Yeshua isn't quoting Exodus 3:14 here. Yeshua isn't quoting any passage from Isaiah here either (as some scholars present). Yahweh can use the words "I am" to say things like "I am the Almighty," but Yeshua is referring to himself in John 8 as the light of the world, the Son of man, the promised Messiah. And he says "Unless you believe I am he, you will die in your sins."

This makes sense, because in order for our sins to be forgiven we must accept the Messiah, the anointed one that Yahweh sent. He was pierced for our transgressions, the punishment for our peace fell on him. All we like sheep have gone astray, but Yahweh hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. If we do not accept the anointed one that Yahweh sent, we will die in our sins because our faith is not resting upon the one who paid the price for our sins.

Before Abraham Was, I Am - Pt. 2
Response to Torah Resource - Pt. 7
 Text: John 8:12-59

Yesterday we began a study on John 8:58 and other texts that are usually included in the discussion of John 8:58. Today I'd like to just pick up where we left off without much introduction.

If you'll recall, we were going through some of the "I am" or "ego eimi" statements in the Gospel of John, leading up to John 8, using the NASB. We've noticed that there is a surrounding context to each of these thus far, and that context in each of these (John 4:26; 6:20; 8:24; 8:28) Yeshua is using "I am he" (ego eimi) to speak of himself as the Messiah, Son of man, Son of God, the one sent by the Father.

We've also noticed that when an "I am" statement lacks a predicate noun, the NASB translates the phrase into English as "I am he." They even one time translated the phrase as "It is I" in John 6:20 which is quite appropriate there considering the context.

There are two other "I am" passages that I have written about: John 13:17-20 and John 18:1-8. I will place all of my notes on my website soon, but today I am choosing to move straight into an exegesis of John 8:12-59 because when we ended yesterday we were deep into John 8, and I want to keep that train of thought.

So let's look back in the direction of John 8:58, the verse I began with yesterday, and see if we can't make some observations based upon the text. In order to do this properly, I think we should slowly read John 8:12-59. I'll make comments and observations as I go along, and we will study this text today.

12 Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, "**I am the Light of the world**; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Here we have what I believe is a key that begins to open up the lock of the "I am" in John 8:58. Yeshua says "I am" (ego eimi) the light of the world. He lights up the path for us to walk upon. Light always overcomes darkness. Yeshua is this light.

13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true."

14 Yeshua answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for **I know where I came from and where I am going**; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

Yeshua here speaks of coming from somewhere. Now, there are few ways I can understand this text, but I want to point out that this is a very profound claim. "I know where I came from, AND where I am going."

If I ask myself, "Where is Yeshua going?" My answer is heaven. It seems to me that where he is going is related here to where he came from. In other words, somehow, he came from heaven (with the Father) and he is going to heaven (with the Father).

This is one of those texts I mentioned yesterday that people who believe in the literal pre-existence of Yeshua would point to. I'm not saying I believe they are correct, but I'm also not saying I'm against that belief either. You can believe in a literal pre-existence and still believe in the Son of Yahweh separate from the Father.

Right now in my current understanding, I believe that the way Yeshua came from heaven was that the logos/word/plan of Yahweh became flesh in his conception in the womb of the virgin Miriam. He had a heavenly origin rather than an earthly origin, thus making him divine.

15 You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.

16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for **I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me.**

Notice why he tells them his judgment is a true judgment. It's because he is not ALONE. In other words, he is not by himself in his judgment. It's him and the Father who sent him.

Recognize here that he speaks of his Father as sending him. He never speaks of himself as the Father in any of this. He's always the one sent by the Father.

17 Even **in your law** it has been written that the testimony of **two** men is true.

18 I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”

I commented yesterday on this text in detail, but I want to mention again that Yeshua sees him and his Father as TWO witnesses. Their witness agrees with one another, thus they certainly are ONE in purpose, plan, thought, unity. But when you count them you count: one... two... They are not one witness, they are two witnesses.

19 So they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Yeshua answered, “**You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.**”

20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; **and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.**

21 Then He said again to them, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.”

22 So the Judahites were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”

Here I want to make an important point. Notice how they misunderstand him here. Apparently, they think he is speaking of committing suicide, when he is actually speaking of going to be with the Father. There is a misunderstanding motif in the Gospel of John. There are other places (like John 2:19 [destroy this temple] - John 3 [you must be born from above]) in John's Gospel where Yeshua is teaching and speaking figuratively or spiritually, yet his listeners (which are sometimes accusers) take him literally or physically.

Never base your belief about who Yeshua is on the words or actions of his accusers. They can misunderstand Yeshua. Base your belief about who Yeshua is upon what he says about himself, or what the holy prophets and apostles say about him.

23 And He was saying to them, “You are from below, **I am from above**; you are of this world, **I am not of this world**.

24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

Here again we have another claim to a pre-existence of some kind by Yeshua. He says he is from above and not of this world. And remember, he's already said, "I am (ego eimi) the light of the world."

On the heels of all this talk he says "Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." As I detailed yesterday, the I am he is the light of the world, the one sent from above by the Father, the Son of man (that we'll see mentioned in verse 28), the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh. All of these titles are related to one another and this is who Yeshua is saying we must believe he is.

25 So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Yeshua said to them, “What have I been saying to you **from the beginning?**

If you examine the Gospel of John you will see that from the beginning of his ministry he was proclaimed as and he proclaimed himself as the Messiah, the lamb of Yahweh, the Son of Yahweh. This is most readily seen in his very FIRST "I am" statement in John 4:25-26 where he says that he is the Messiah the woman at the well is speaking about.

26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, **but He who sent Me** is true; and the things which I heard from **Him**, these I speak to the world.”

27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about **the Father**.

28 So Yeshua said, “When you lift up **the Son of Man**, (Daniel 7:13-14; John 3:14) then you will know that **I am He**, (the Son of Man) and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as **the Father taught Me**.

29 And **He who sent Me** is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

He never claims to be the Father in this entire passage. He always says he was sent by the Father, taught by the Father, and does nothing on his own.

30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

31 So Yeshua was saying to those Judahites who had believed Him, “**If** you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine;

32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

Let me mention here that Yeshua places conditions upon being a TRUE disciple of his. He tells the Judahites who had believed Him - IF you CONTINUE in my word, then you are TRULY my disciples.

There are many people that say they believe in Yeshua, but in time they do not continue in his word, thus they were not true disciples. I think that is important to understand, and this comes directly from the mouth of Yeshua.

33 They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’” **34** Yeshua answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

Notice again how they are misunderstanding Yeshua. He is speaking of being a slave to sin, figurative. They take him literally and say that they've never been literally enslaved to anyone. This is the second time now that they've misunderstood what he is saying.

35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

37 I know that you are Abraham’s descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

Here is where Yeshua says some very brash things against these men. Remember, he's already told them they are from below and of this world, and that they needed to be freed from the slavery of sin. It's important to realize that they are gradually becoming more and more upset with Yeshua as he continues in his statements here. Notice he begins some brash comments by saying to them, "My word has no place in you."

38 I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.”

39 They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Yeshua said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham.

40 But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

41 You are doing the deeds of your father.” They said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God.”

42 Yeshua said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, **for I proceeded forth and have come from God**, for **I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me**.

Notice Yeshua is again claiming a heavenly origin here [like in verses 14 and 23], but nonetheless apart from Yahweh [God]. He is not claiming to be Yahweh God, but he is claiming to have proceeded forth and came from Yahweh.

43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? **It is because you cannot hear My word**.

Notice the brashness here. You CANNOT hear my word.

44 **You are of your father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

You don't get any more straight-forward than that. You can only imagine how angry these men got by hearing this statement and what follows.

45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear *them*, **because you are not of God.**”

Again the brashness, You ARE NOT of Yahweh.

48 The Judahites answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

Here we see that they are getting upset/perturbed because they start referring to Yeshua in a demeaning way.

49 Yeshua answered, “I do not have a demon; **but I honor My Father**, and you dishonor Me.

50 But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.

51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.”

52 The Judahites said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets *also*; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.’”

Here again they misunderstand Yeshua. Yeshua speaks of the SECOND death here, because we do read of Abraham dying, and the prophets as well. Yeshua is talking about eternal life, not life in this current body.

53 Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out *to be*?"

Now, let me point out here that Israelites had no problem recognizing that the coming Messiah would be greater than Abraham. Here's the thing though: these men believed Yeshua was a spurious Messiah. They didn't accept him as the Messiah. This was probably due in large part because of his rejection of their traditions and because of his exposing their religious hypocrisy and play acting. Plus all through this account he is barraging them with very harsh words.

It is interesting to note commentator John Gill's notes on this verse. "The Jews had a mighty opinion of their ancestors, especially of Abraham; and yet they allow the Messiah to be greater than he, as Jesus truly was: so one of their ancient commentators on those words of Isa 52:13 thus paraphrases them, "Behold my servant shall deal prudently," this is the King Messiah; "he shall be exalted" above Abraham, as it is written, Ge 14:22, "and extolled" above Moses, as it is written, Nu 11:12, and he shall be higher than the ministering angels, as it is written, Eze 1:26, for he shall be גדול מן אבות, "greater than the fathers"." [Tachuma apud Huls. p. 321.]

So many of the Judahites had no problem with the concept of the coming Messiah being greater than Abraham, it's just that they did not accept Yeshua as being this Messiah, as he claimed to be.

54 Yeshua answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; **it is My Father who glorifies Me**, of whom you say, 'He is our God';

55 and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, **but I do know Him and keep His word.**

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see **My day, and he saw it and was glad.**"

Yeshua here does not claim to have seen Abraham or that Abraham saw him (specifically in person), but rather he says "your father Abraham rejoiced to see *MY DAY*." When I read that I think about Abraham looking into the future - by faith - and seeing the promised, coming Messiah. Hebrews 11 talks about Abraham being a man of great faith. Part of this faith was that the Messiah would one day come into the world. Abraham saw the Messiah's day by faith and this made him glad.

There is a text in the Apocrypha that speaks of Yahweh revealing things to Abraham that were not revealed to others. It is in 2 Esdras (sometimes called 4 Esdras), chapter 3, verses 12-14: "When those who dwelt on the earth began to multiply, they produced children and peoples and many nations, and again they began to be more ungodly than were their ancestors. And when they were committing iniquity before you, **you chose for yourself one of them, whose name was Abraham; and you loved him, and to him only you revealed the end of the times, secretly by night.**"

57 So the Judahites said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

Notice here again, they misunderstand him. They actually put words into his mouth. They question him, "You aren't even 50. Have you seen Abraham?" But Yeshua never said he saw Abraham. He rather said, "Abraham rejoiced to see MY DAY." See, they are taking Yeshua literally, but he is speaking figuratively.

58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

We come now to our initial text, and I hope it is easier to understand because of the background we've covered.

First, notice how the translators leave off the "he" here after I am even though there is no predicate noun. Up to this point (and even after this point in John 13 and John 18) they consistently translate "ego eimi" (when there is no predicate noun) as "I am he." Here, they leave it off. Why? Perhaps there is a prejudice or bias here with them? Perhaps they are holding on to believing that this is a reference to Exodus 3:14? At any case, consistency should include the "he" attached to I am just as in all the other cases.

So Yeshua has just said that Abraham rejoiced to see his day, the Judahites misunderstand him and take him literally, and then Yeshua says "Before Abraham was born (before Abraham came into existence), I am he." Now, who has Yeshua claimed to be all through John 4, John 6, and John 8? The light of the world, the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh, the one sent by the Father.

What Yeshua is saying here is that he was all of these things, before Abraham was ever born. This could be understood in one of two ways.

1. It can be taken as an actual pre-existence in heaven with the Father before Abraham was born.
2. It can be taken figuratively, as the logos of Yahweh, the plan of Yahweh. In other words, Yeshua was the Messiah, the light of the world, the Son of Man, pre-ordained, pre-destined, before Abraham was ever born.

I lean towards this second view because all through this chapter where Yeshua speaks in figurative, spiritual language, the Judahites he is talking to misunderstand him and take him literally.

59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Yeshua hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Here is what most people go to, to say that Yeshua was claiming to be Yahweh. They say, "See?! These men understood he was claiming to be Yahweh and that's why they picked up stones to stone him."

Number 1: If *they* understand him as claiming to be Yahweh, does that mean that *Yeshua* was claiming to be Yahweh? Once again, don't base your beliefs of who Yeshua is upon the words/actions of his accusers whom you've seen up to this point don't understand many things that Yeshua has said.

Number 2: **The text does not tell us that even *they* understood him as claiming to be Yahweh.** It's possible that they did, but the text doesn't tell us that. Would that be the only reason someone would try to stone Yeshua? Not at all. Remember, they were already upset with Yeshua because of his brash words against them all through the passage. So they were getting more and more upset. On top of this, they could have just understood him as claiming to literally exist before Abraham. That he was actually older than Abraham, and they picked up stones to stone him because they thought he was crazy for saying such.

Number 3: It is quite possible that the reason they stoned him is because he was claiming to be the promised Messiah, and they did not believe him to be the true Messiah. They thought he was a false prophet, a spurious Messiah; they did not accept him for who he claimed to be (the Son of man in Daniel 7), and therefore they sought to stone him for his false claims after this lengthy rebuking he gave them as recorded here in John 8.

The whole point in all of this is that when Yeshua says "Before Abraham was born, I am he" there isn't anything in the context of John chapter 8 that has to push us in the direction that he was claiming to be Yahweh. I think this has been very clear as we've moved through these texts yesterday, and John 8 today verse-by-verse.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

John 13:17-20. This is a passage that comes right on the heels of Yeshua's instructions about foot-washing. Let's read it.

17 "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

18 "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.'

19"From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that **I am He**.

20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

Okay, here again in verse 19, John records Yeshua as saying "ego eimi" yet the NASB translators render it as "I am he." Why? Once again, the lack of a predicate noun (like in "I am the light of the world.") Who is Yeshua referring to himself here as when he says "I am he"? or "ego eimi"?

Some people may not think it is apparent, but if we just take a good look at this text, I think it *is* apparent. What helps here is to recognize that Yeshua is quoting a Scripture, and Old Testament Scripture, in verse 18. This is why he says in verse 18 "that the Scripture may be fulfilled," and this is not just any Scripture, but it is a Scripture that is considered to be a "Messianic Prophecy." A prophetic Scripture about the coming Davidic Messiah - Psalm 41:9 which reads:

9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.

Obviously, this finds a fulfillment in Judas Iscariot. He ate bread with Yeshua, but then came against him in betrayal. Yeshua is thus saying in John 13, "I'm telling you this before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe that I am he. I am the Davidic Messiah in the Psalms. The prophecy in Psalms pertains to me being betrayed." Let's move on to another text in John, 18:5-6, and 8. We'll read John 18:1-8.

1 When Yeshua had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.
2 Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Yeshua had often met there with His disciples.
3 Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.
4 So Yeshua, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, "Whom do you seek?"
5 They answered Him, "Yeshua the Nazarene." He said to them, "**I am He.**" And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them.
6 So when He said to them, "**I am He,**" they drew back and fell to the ground.
7 Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Yeshua the Nazarene."
8 Yeshua answered, "I told you that **I am He;** so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

First again, let me point out that in all 3 of the "ego eimi" occurrences here in John 18, the NASB translators supply the word "he" to "I am" because of the lack of the predicate noun in the sentences.

That being said, I believe this is one of the easiest of all these texts in John when it comes to who Yeshua is identifying himself as when he says "I am he."

Notice in verses 4-5. Yeshua asks them "Who do you seek?" They says "Yeshua the Nazarene" and he replies "I am he." So when he says "I am he" he is saying "I am Yeshua the Nazarene (Yeshua of Nazareth)." It's that simple. The same thing happens in verses 7-8.

Some people try to make a huge leap from verse 6 where when Yeshua said "I am he" the Roman officers drew back and fell to the ground. They argue that the reason they fell to the ground is because Yeshua was Yahweh.

Well, that's what you call eisegesis, the reading into a text what the text itself does not say. That is total speculation. I have just as much right to speculate that the reason they fell to the ground is because of the power Yeshua had as Yahweh's only begotten Son. But, the text doesn't tell us specifically. All we know for sure is that Yeshua's "I am he" statements here are simply identifying himself as "Yeshua of Nazareth" the man the Roman officers were looking for.

I'd like to now look at an "ego eimi" text in the Gospel of John where someone OTHER than Yeshua used those words. We will look at this text, in John 9, and then we will go to our main text of John 8:58. Look at John 9:1-9.

- 9:1** As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.
2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"
3 Yeshua answered, "*It was* neither *that* this man sinned, nor his parents; but *it was* so that the works of God might be displayed in him.
4 We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.
5 While I am (*es*) in the world, I am (*eimi*) the Light of the world."
6 When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,
7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came *back* seeing.
8 Therefore the neighbors, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, "Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?"
9 Others were saying, "This is he," *still* others were saying, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the one."

Now, what's important to note here is that at the end of verse 9 the blind man says "ego eimi." I don't have a problem translating this "I am the one" as the NASB does. We can just as easily translate it "I am he. (KJV, ASV, YLT)" Darby's translation has "It is I" here just like we saw back in John 6:20. Any of these will work because this use of "ego eimi" lacks the predicate noun just like all the other uses we've been considering through the Gospel of John.

My next point is this: the blind man says "ego eimi" in reference to what? Why does this man say "I am he" or "I am the one"? Well, it's because everyone was discussing what

had happened to him. Some were saying, "he's the blind begger" while others were saying "no, he's just like the blind beggar." But this man kept saying "I am he! I am he!" meaning, "I am the blind beggar that just got healed by Yeshua!"

This just further shows that the Greek words "ego eimi" are used as a means of identification. That identification can and does vary depending upon the subject and context of a passage. Certainly no one would argue that the blind man was talking about Exodus 3:14 when he was saying "ego eimi" would they?

Well, you wouldn't think anyone would, but I asked Rob Vanhoff this question when we were discussing John 8:58 on a blog post he wrote back in December of 2014.

My question: Was the blind man revealing the name of the Father in John 9:9 when he said "ego eimi"?

Rob's answer: Without knowing it, yes. It is in the form of a confession, a public declaration/testimony of a divine miracle. The miracle itself however is the bigger revelation.

Rob goes on to give an explanation for his answer, but I want to ask you listening today and anyone who may listen to this sermon later on. Do you believe that John 9:9 was written to secretly reveal the name of the Father through the words "ego eimi"? I honestly believe that anyone who says "Yes" to that question is either being intentionally dishonest (because of not wanting to just admit "no"), or they are just so entrenched in this "ego eimi" fascination that they have to somehow link it up with Exodus 3:14.

It is pure eisegesis to say that John 9:9 is a veiled reference to Exodus 3:14. The obvious understanding of John 9:9 is that this man was saying "I am the blind man who was healed by Yeshua."