

described in John 17:24 following is properly associated with the glory that Yeshua is to once again receive as He returns to Heaven, noted in John 17:5: “Father, I also want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory—the glory You gave Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:26, TLV). Here, the verb *theōreō* (θεωρέω) is employed to describe the intended action of the Disciples: “**to observe someth. with sustained attention, be a spectator, look at, observe, perceive**” (BDAG).²⁵⁴ Yeshua having been the Son loved “before the creation of the world” (NIV) or “before the world’s foundation” (HCSB), *pro katabolēs kosmou* (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου), and the fact that the glory is something that the Disciples are to witness manifested upon Yeshua, is indicative of how the Disciples will be present with Yeshua in the future Messianic Kingdom, where He will demonstrate His pre-existent glory. Yeshua’s Disciples are worthy of this, as Yeshua has obeyed His Father in the actions He was to perform while on Earth (John 17:25-26).

John 18:1-11

“Roman Soldiers Encounter the Supernatural Aura of Yeshua”

“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. Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Yeshua had often met there with His disciples. Judas then, having received the *Roman* cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. So Yeshua, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ They answered Him, ‘Yeshua the Nazarene.’ He said to them, ‘I am He.’ And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground. Therefore He again asked them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ And they said, ‘Yeshua the Nazarene.’ Yeshua answered, ‘I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,’ to fulfill the word which He spoke, ‘Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one.’ Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. So Yeshua said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?’”

Yeshua was betrayed by Judas Iscariot in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:2), who had led a group of Roman soldiers to arrest Him, with the approval of the Jewish religious leaders: “So Judah, having taken a band of soldiers and some officers from the ruling *kohanim* and Pharisees, comes there with lanterns, torches, and weapons” (John 18:3, TLV). As is it narrated, “Yeshua, who knew everything that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Whom do you want?’” (John 18:4, CJB/CJSB).

As John 18:5-6 is recorded in a common Christian version like the RSV, “They answered him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am he.’ Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When he said to them, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.” In the source text, however, readers encounter *legi autois egō eimi* (λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ εἰμι; John 18:5) and *hōs oun eipen autois egō eimi* (ὡς οὖν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἐγὼ εἰμι; John 18:6), which is more literally rendered as “said to them, I AM!” and “Then when He said to them, I AM” (LITV). While Yeshua’s statements in John 18:5-6 are surely representative of Him identifying Himself to the Roman cohort, it is undeniable that the *egō eimi* formula of Exodus 3:14 is employed here. And, not only is the *egō eimi* formula of the burning bush theophany employed here, but there is even an explanation given to readers: “When he said, ‘I AM,’ they went backward from him

²⁵⁴ BDAG, 454.

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and fell to the ground” (John 18:6, CJB/CJSB). It is easily deduced that when Yeshua identified Himself to those coming to arrest Him, that some supernatural power was demonstrated.

There is a repetition witnessed in the further narrative of John 18:7-8, as it recorded in a Christian version like the RSV, “Again he asked them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus answered, ‘I told you that I am he; so, if you seek me, let these men go.’” While John 18:8 includes another statement of self-identification to the soldiers intending to arrest Yeshua, the source text communicates *apekrithē Iēsous eipon humin hoti egō eimi* (ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι), “Jesus answered, I told you that I AM” (LITV).

It has not gone unnoticed by many commentators on the Gospel of John, that John 16:5, 6, and 8 all include an important employment of the *egō eimi* or “I am” formula. While it is narratively recognized how Yeshua identifies Himself to the Roman soldiers, given their falling back in His presence, it does too little to simply assume that “I am He” (NASU) is all that is intended. Most of the commentators we have been considering in our examination of Johannine passages, recognize that there is a deliberate connection intended between Yeshua’s speaking “I am,” and some concepts of the God of Israel witnessed in the Tanach:

- F.F. Bruce: “His reply, ‘I am he’ (Gk. *egō eimi*), can be understood on two levels, and this is probably the Evangelist’s intention. On one level, it simply means ‘I am he’ in the ordinary sense, such as any man might use in similar circumstances. But in an appropriate setting *egō eimi* is more than that; it is a word of power, the equivalent of the God of Israel’s self-identifying affirmation ‘I am He’. On the lips of Jesus it has already had something approaching this force in the Gospel of John (cf. 8:24, 28); and that it has this force here is plain from the retreat and prostration of those addressed.”²⁵⁵
- Leon Morris: “When they say, ‘Jesus of Nazareth’, He replies, ‘I am’, which may well mean ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth’. But the answer is in the style of deity (see on 8:58). This must have been a most unexpected move on His part. The soldiers had come out secretly to arrest a fleeing peasant. In the gloom they find themselves confronted by a commanding figure, who so far from running away comes out to meet them and speaks to them in the very language of deity.”²⁵⁶
- George R. Beasley-Murray: “The reply of Jesus, ‘I am (he),’ may be seen as a normal self-identification, but we are almost certainly intended to recognize its overtones, as throughout this Gospel (cf. esp. 6:20; 8:28, 54)...The reality of the *mysterium tremendum* before the presence of God (especially through a vision) is frequently illustrated in the Bible (e.g., Ezek 1:28; Dan 10:9; Acts 9:4; Rev 1:17), and it is not a phenomenon limited to Jews. It is entirely comprehensible that the Jewish constables of the temple were awed by the ‘I am’ uttered by Jesus in the garden (cf. the reaction to him in the temple, reported in John 7:46), and their shrinking back could have produced what is described in v 6; moreover, we should not dismiss as absurd an awesome effect of Jesus on the Roman soldiers in that situation.”²⁵⁷
- D.A. Carson: “Jesus’ answer, *I am he*...evokes a startling response: *they drew back and fell to the ground*. The Greek form of Jesus’ answer is ambiguous: *egō eimi* (lit. ‘I am’) is often to be read as mere self-identification (‘It is I’), or as if the appropriate complement were inserted from the context (*i.e.* ‘I am Jesus’), but can

²⁵⁵ Bruce, *John*, 341.

²⁵⁶ Morris, *John*, 743.

²⁵⁷ Beasley-Murray, pp 322-323.

bear far richer overtones (*cf.* notes on 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19). In Isaiah 40-55, it is God himself who repeatedly takes these words on his lips. But precisely because the expression is indeed ambiguous, and the context provides a perfectly adequate complement, we must not conjecture that Jesus' interlocutors fell back for no other reason than that Jesus uttered an expression that ought to be reserved for the Almighty alone."²⁵⁸

- Colin G. Kruse: "When the soldiers and temple officials said who they were looking for, Jesus replied, 'I am he' (*egō eimi*). This one of the many uses of *egō eimi* in the Fourth Gospel....The response to Jesus' self-identification was dramatic...In the light of this remarkable reaction, it is possible that Jesus' use of *egō eimi*, as well as being a means of self-identification ('I am he') involved the application of the divine name to himself—a claim to be one with God...Whether or not the Roman soldiers and temple officials understood Jesus' words in this way, it is clear some revelation of his power and authority must have occurred to make them draw back and fall to the ground."²⁵⁹
- Bruce Milne: "The sense of Jesus' control is especially prominent in his *I am*. Significantly, in the Jewish trial before the Sanhedrin, which John does not detail, it is this phrase, unpacked in terms of the Son of Man of Daniel 7, which triggers the frenzied response of the court and the unanimous capital charge of blasphemy (Mk. 14:62f.). On the utterance of these words the temple snatch-team fall backwards, by their posture expressing the overwhelming nature of divine majesty [referencing: Ezekiel 1:25-28; Daniel 10:4ff; Acts 9:4ff; Revelation 1:13ff]."²⁶⁰
- Ben Witherington III: "Jesus says, '*Ego eimi*,' which means either 'I am he' or 'I am.'...Here some aspects of the context suggest the same thing that John 8:24, 28, 58 does—that the theophanic or divine formula is involved. Only so can the reaction of the soldiers be explained. They backed up and fell to the ground. This may also be said to be a pictorial fulfillment of Ps. 27:2: 'When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—my adversaries and foes—they shall stumble and fall.'...On the other hand, this same phrase, *ego eimi* in v. 8, used again in *response* to the information that they are seeking Jesus of Nazareth, appears to mean 'I am he.' Perhaps the usage here is yet another example of Johannine double-entendre."²⁶¹
- Gary M. Burge: "Jesus identifies himself plainly (18:5-7) but this certainly means a great deal more than a mere self-identification. Jesus uses the 'I am' formula we have seen elsewhere in the Gospel (e.g., 4:26; 8:24, 58), which no doubt recalls God's divine name [referencing Exodus 3:14]. John underscores this in 18:6, 'When Jesus said, 'I am...,' they drew back to the ground."²⁶²
- Craig S. Keener: "Jesus' self-revelation, 'I am' (ἐγώ εἰμι, 18:5, 6, 8), can mean simply 'I am (he),' that is, 'I am the one you are seeking.' But the reader of the Gospel by this point understands that the Jesus of this Gospel means more than this; he is declaring his divine identity (see comment on 8:58). Lest anyone fail to

²⁵⁸ Carson, *John*, 578.

²⁵⁹ Kruse, *John*, pp 350-351.

²⁶⁰ Milne, 254.

²⁶¹ Witherington, *John*, 286.

²⁶² Burge, *John*, 492.

grasp this point, the response even of Jesus' opponents in the story world confirms it (as in 8:59; 10:31, 33, 39): the divine name causes their involuntary prostration (18:6)."²⁶³

- Andreas J. Köstenberger: "'I am he' reads more literally 'I am.' In light of the response...the phrase probably has connotations of deity (see commentary at 8:24)...'They drew back and fell to the ground'...Falling to the ground is regularly a reaction to divine revelation {referencing: Ezekiel 1:28; 44:4; Daniel 2:46; 8:18; 10:9; Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14; Revelation 1:17; 19:10}. This striking response also conveys the powerlessness of Jesus' enemies when confronted with the power of God."²⁶⁴

There is no issue in recognizing that John 18:5, 6, and 8 all include a statement of self-identification on the part of Yeshua the Messiah, to the Roman soldiers arresting Him. But as it is stated, "When therefore He said to them, 'I AM,' they drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:6, PME). Here, the reader is forced to recognize the significance of Yeshua saying "I am." And, given the fact that He is speaking this to pagan Romans, there is an excellent chance that rather than speaking the Hebrew *ani hu* (אני הוּ; Delitzsch) or Aramaic *ena* (אנא), that He may have actually spoken the Greek *egō eimi*—directly leading readers to Exodus 3:14 in the Septuagint.

What also need not escape our attention is that when approached by soldiers, it is witnessed how Simon Peter actually takes a sword, and slices off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus: "Then Shim'on Kefa, who had a sword, drew it and struck the slave of the *cohen hagadol*, cutting off his right ear; the slave's name was Melekh" (John 18:10, CJB/CJSB). Yeshua is incensed that Peter would interfere in what was taking place (John 18:11), and the record of Luke 22:51²⁶⁵ is that Yeshua healed him. So, not only did the soldiers arresting Yeshua experience something supernatural when He spoke "I am" to them; they also technically witnessed a miracle in Malchus' ear being healed.

John 19:1-9

"Yeshua is Mocked for His Claims"

"Pilate then took Yeshua and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they *began* to come up to Him and say, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and to give Him slaps *in the face*. Pilate came out again and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.' Yeshua then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* said to them, 'Behold, the Man!' So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, 'Crucify, crucify!' Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.' The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God.'"

The scene of Yeshua's humiliation is surely important, as it bears testimony to the unjustified and unwarranted torture He endured, particularly at the hands of Roman soldiers, who mocked the Lord, dressing Him up in a costume as though He were an Earthly king (John 19:1-4). Pontius Pilate, having let this take place, presents Yeshua before the crowd (John 19:5), which broadly exclaims "Put him to death on the stake! Put him to death on the stake!" (John 19:6a, CJB/CJSB). Pilate, being a customary Roman, does not think that any Roman law has

²⁶³ Keener, *John*, pp 1081-1082.

²⁶⁴ Köstenberger, pp 507-508.

²⁶⁵ "But Yeshua answered and said, 'Stop! No more of this.' And He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51).