

The Nature of Yeshua in the Gospel of John

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

began to find fault with Jesus.” The reason why there was tension about Yeshua saying “I am the bread that came down out of heaven” (*egō eimi ho artos ho katabas ek tou ouranou*, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβάς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), is witnessed involving the close relationship that Yeshua demonstrates Himself to have with the God of Israel. The religious leaders in Capernaum, having known Yeshua in person, think that He has entirely terrestrial origins: “They said, ‘Isn’t this Yeshua Ben-Yosef? We know his father and mother! How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” (John 6:42, CJB/CJSB). The audience of detractors to whom Yeshua has to issue a strong word, about His true identity being predicated on Him being the Agent sent from God the Father, doubtlessly presented difficulties—because to them, Yeshua was the human son of Joseph and Mary, who had been a regular participant at synagogue activities and member of the local community.

Yeshua asks those present, “Stop complaining among yourselves” (John 6:43, HCSB). If complaining, murmuring, or grumbling is all that those present are going to do, then no resolution as to who Yeshua actually is *and where He really is from* will be found. That Yeshua is a supernatural entity, something agreed upon by supporters of either a high or low Christology, is witnessed in His assertion, “No one can come to Me unless My Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44a, TLV). This somewhat repeats what Yeshua had said earlier (John 6:37). **Yeshua is One who has been sent by the Father, and the Father draws people to Him.** Yeshua, without question, is an important figure who has important teachings and messages that His fellow Jews need to hear. However, Yeshua being far more than just a sent, supernatural entity—such as a high ranking angel or archangel—is seen in His claim, “I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44b, TLV), as Yeshua will be responsible for the general resurrection (cf. Daniel 12:1-2), which is hardly something one would expect from a created, albeit supernatural, being. Yeshua could just as easily have said “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and *the Father* will raise him up on the last day (John 6:44, NASU modified). Furthermore, it cannot go unnoticed how in later statements, Yeshua Himself will be the One who draws people to Himself (John 12:32). So indeed, the origins and identity of Yeshua are innately intertwined with that of the Father.

The close relationship between Yeshua and the Heavenly Father are further witnessed in how Yeshua appeals to Tanach Scripture. He says, “It is written in the Prophets, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has listened and learned from the Father comes to Me” (John 6:45, TLV). This is a quotation from Isaiah 54:13, “All your sons will be taught of the LORD; and the well-being of your sons will be great,” and specifically appears within a series of prophecies detailing the restoration of Zion (Isaiah 40-66). It has been interjected that perhaps the sentiment of Jeremiah 31:34 may also be in view, given its claim, “‘for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the LORD.” It should be immediately recognized how the ministry and actions of Yeshua, are representative of the eschatological Zion being restored. Bruce properly indicates, “In the NT the restoration of Zion after the Babylonian exile, celebrated in Isa. 40-66, is treated as a parable of the restoration effected by Christ...Those who...respond...by...coming to Christ [show] that they are children and citizens of the new Jerusalem, as the prophet foretold.”¹¹⁷ Allusions to Isaiah 54:13 and Jeremiah 31:34, would definitely have had those in the synagogue at Capernaum acknowledging how Yeshua presents Himself as a significant Messiah figure, a cause of enacting what these prophecies represented in the lives of His disciples and followers.

That Yeshua is more than just a significant Messiah figure is recognized by His further claim, “not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father”

¹¹⁷ Bruce, *John*, pp 156, 157.

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(John 6:46, ESV). Yeshua qualifies Himself not just as “the one being from – God” (Brown and Comfort),¹¹⁸ the source text having *ho ōn para tou Theou* (ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ), but as the One who has actually seen God the Father. This presupposes that Yeshua the Messiah has encountered God the Father in the Heavenly realm, a statement of pre-existence. In John 1:18 previously, this has been qualified as, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.” Yeshua presents Himself to those at Capernaum as mediating the encounters that mortals are to have with God the Father, as the one sent from Him, as those who believe through Him will have eternal life (John 6:47). As Carson describes it, “he is the one who ‘narrates’ God (cf. 1:18; 12:45)...[I]t is simultaneously true to say that they are ‘taught by God’ if and only if they truly ‘hear’ Jesus.”¹¹⁹

The greatness of who Yeshua actually is, continues to build. The magnitude of the eternal life (*zōēn aiōnion*, ζῶην αἰώνιον; John 6:47) accessible in Yeshua is seen in His word “I AM the bread of life” (John 6:48, PME), transcribed in the source text as *Egō eimi ho artos tēs zōēs* (Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζῶης), with a connection deliberately made with the burning bush theophany of Exodus 3:14. The Messiah contrasts the bread of life representative in Himself, to the manna eaten by the Ancient Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 16:15), which only provided temporary, physical sustenance. Yeshua says, “Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died” (John 6:49, NRSV). That the manna eaten by the Israelites actually did have some supernatural origins, is noted by Psalm 78:25, “Man did eat the bread of angels [*lechem abbirim*, אַבְיִרִים, לֶחֶם]; He sent them food in abundance.” Yeshua’s bread of eternal life also has supernatural origins, to be sure:

“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 [*egō eimi ho artos ho zōn*, ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν] which came down out of Heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever” (John 6:50-51a, PME).

When reviewed closely, the supernatural origins of Yeshua’s bread of eternal life are greater than that of the manna, and could not be provided by a created supernatural entity. The statements in John 6:50-51a are affirming of the fact that Yeshua is the One sent to Earth from the Father in Heaven (John 6:46), that Yeshua is integrated into the Divine Identity by saying “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48), and that what He offers is eternal life (John 6:47) in a restored Zion (John 6:45) and not mere physical sustenance. Are these the statements that one should expect to only be made of a supernatural yet created entity? Or, is Yeshua’s unique agency as the Son sent from the Father, when evaluated, indeed indicative of how He is of the same being as the Father?

Yeshua informs His audience what the bread of eternal life actually is: “This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51b, TLV). Today as Bible readers, we benefit from understanding the wider narrative, and how Yeshua was sacrificed upon the tree for human sins, resurrected from the dead, and what He meant when He said that the bread was His flesh. As is seen in the reaction of the Jewish religious leaders (John 6:52), Yeshua’s words caused quite a stir, as they did not understand what He was communicating.

Yeshua is the One sent from the Father in Heaven (John 6:44, 46), who also employs the Exodus 3:14 “I am” formula when presenting Himself as the bread of eternal life (John 6:41, 48, 51). But Yeshua is no mere supernatural entity who has been sent from Heaven, as seen in His statement, “Yes, indeed! I tell you that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves” (John 6:53, CJB/CJSB). The attention of His audience was mainly focused on what Yeshua meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, which

¹¹⁸ Brown and Comfort, 343.

¹¹⁹ Carson, *John*, 294.

are obviously metaphors of participating in and benefitting from the results of His sacrifice for human sin (John 6:54-56, 58). However, Yeshua has referred to His activity via the title of the Son of Man, of Him being the One brought before the Ancient of Days in Heaven, to whom all of Creation must pay homage in worship (Daniel 7:13-14). Indeed, Yeshua's once having been in Heaven is affirmed in the words He will later issue to His Disciples, wondering about His statements: "*What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?*" (John 6:62).

When it is recognized that not only is Yeshua the One in whom eternal life is found, but that one must partake of His beaten body and shed blood to be redeemed—then as the Daniel 7:13-14 Son of Man coming from Heaven to Earth, the gravity of what He has provided for human beings, can only be intensified. *Yeshua is no mere supernatural agent; Yeshua is the "I am bread of eternal life."* At the same time, Yeshua came to the Earth, was born as a human, and in His humility as a human relied entirely on His Father in Heaven for everything. As He told those at Capernaum, "Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who eats of Me will also live because of Me" (John 6:57, TLV). Michaels concludes that for John 6:57, "The meaning suggested by the context is that Jesus lives his life on earth from day to day in dependence on the Father, while the disciple, in turn, lives in daily dependence on Jesus."¹²⁰ Yeshua being in complete reliance upon His Heavenly Father in His human Incarnation—with His followers also being required to live the same way, "because of Me" (*di eme*, δι' ἐμέ)—highlights the uniqueness of Yeshua's service. Yeshua is not just the Daniel 7:13-14 exalted Son of Man; Yeshua demonstrates what it means to be truly human to His followers, via a supreme service which will culminate in His death.

John 6:60-69

"Yeshua's Disciples Recognize Him as the Holy One of God"

"Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, 'This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?' But Yeshua, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, 'Does this cause you to stumble? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Yeshua knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.' As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Yeshua said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.'"

Upon encountering the discussion that their Master Yeshua had at the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:41-59), it is clear that His Disciples were having to process a great deal, as it concerned not only the mission, but also the identity, of who they were following. As it is narrated, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60, RSV) or "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (NIV). The discussion between the Disciples obviously got heated a bit, as they were arguing among themselves (John 6:61a), and so Yeshua asked them some direct questions: "Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man going back up to the place where He was before?" (John 6:61b-62, TLV).

¹²⁰ J. Ramsey Michaels, *New International Biblical Commentary: John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 119.