

I AM

Blessings in Yeshua!

Yeshua identified with "I AM"

As we enter a new calendar year we want to focus on who Yeshua is and on who we are in Him. His **identity** determined His **destiny**. So does ours. Many of us know who we are positionally in Messiah, but we must also know who we are experientially if we are to fulfill our individual destinies in the Lord. Who knows if this might not be our last year here on earth. Shouldn't we strive to fulfill the calling God has on our lives before we meet Him face to face?

The Gospel of John is replete with proclamations of Yeshua as "I AM." This is radical from a Jewish perspective since the only one before Him who referred to Himself in this way was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This happened when Moses asked God how to refer to Him when he went to tell the children of Israel that God was going to help them. The Lord said: *"Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you."* (Exodus 3:14)

Yeshua says this same **I AM** nine times in John's Gospel. With these statements Yeshua is intimating that He is to be identified with God. For example in John 8:24 Yeshua says, *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."* An even more astounding statement is made by Yeshua when He says: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* (John 8:58)

The Seven "I AM" Sayings of Yeshua

Yeshua not only made statements that identified Him with the **I AM** of God; He also made seven proclamations recorded by John in which He explained who He was in greater detail. Dr. Randall Smith expounds upon these seven sayings in his video **The Seven 'I AM' Sayings of Jesus** available this month as a Jewish Jewels offer. Dr. Smith clarifies in this video that for the Greek mind, it was sufficient to hear what Yeshua said. The Hebrew mind, on the other hand, demanded to see the things that Yeshua did, so Dr. Smith also made a video on **The Seven 'I DO' Miracles of Jesus**.

We are focusing this month on what Yeshua said about Himself rather than what He did because we believe that we should move from knowledge to action. Many people perish from lack of knowledge. We also need to know who WE are in Yeshua before we can do the works that He did.

"I AM The Bread Of Life"

This first **I AM** saying of Yeshua is basic and foundational. Yeshua made this proclamation following a miracle in which he fed five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fishes. Many of the people who experienced this miracle were impressed with the provision of bread. Yeshua rebuked them for this, admonishing them: *"Do not labor for the food which*

perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life..." (John 6:27) Yeshua went on to make a comparison between Himself and the manna from heaven that God gave the Israelites in the desert. Then Yeshua said, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."* In effect Yeshua was saying that He, like the manna, had come down from heaven, sent by God.

Bread in the Hebrew mind represents the needs of man. It is the staple of life and is essential for existence. The traditional Jewish blessing before a meal only mentions bread, since it represents all the foods that God provides. When God is blessed for bringing forth bread from the earth, we see Yeshua, the Bread from heaven, who went into the earth and came forth, resurrected by the power of God.

Because Yeshua is the **Bread of Life**, He can meet all our needs. He wants to become part of who we are, just as the bread we eat becomes a part of us. Yeshua is not just any bread, He is the unleavened (sinless) bread of sincerity and truth. This is the bread we need, every day. The Torah tells us that *"...man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."* (Deuteronomy 8:3) Yeshua is the living Word of God that feeds the spirit of man. May we all hunger for more of Him in 2003!

"I AM The Light Of The World"

On the last great day of the Feast of Sukkot or Tabernacles, Yeshua said: *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* (John 8:12) Many of the Jews who heard Him speak these words connected them with the Messianic prophecy: *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."* (Isaiah 9:2)

The Jewish people who were celebrating Tabernacles remembered when the God of Israel was their light in the desert for forty years. The giant menorahs that lit up the court of the women on Sukkot provided the backdrop against which Yeshua made this proclamation. He was the light that God had sent. He backed up this truth by healing a man born blind. Before Yeshua healed the man He said to His talmidim, *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."* (John 9:5) Without Yeshua, we are walking around in darkness. May **ALL** our loved ones realize this and come to **The Light** in 2003.

"I AM The Door"

Yeshua made this declaration at Hanukkah when He said: *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."* (John 10:9) In his video, Dr. Smith mentions a time when he visited a shepherd in the Judean wilderness. He noticed that the sheepfold or enclosure for the sheep had no door. Dr. Smith inquired about this and the shepherd said to him, "I am the door." He slept with his body completely covering the opening of the sheepfold so that no enemy could harm his sheep. Just as the shepherd protects his sheep, Yeshua protects us.

The door also signifies our access to the Father through Yeshua. We enter the kingdom of God through Him. There are not many doors to the kingdom. Only one. Yeshua is that door. When we enter that door, blessing and abundance awaits us. Truly, the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep.

"I AM The Good Shepherd"

Not all shepherds were good. God warned the wicked shepherds saying: *"Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them."* (Ezekiel 34:4) In verse 23 of the same chapter God promised a good shepherd saying: *"I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them..."* Yeshua is the shepherd of Psalm 23 and Psalm 80:1 (identified as the God of Israel). Yeshua was implying this when He called Himself the Good Shepherd and then went on to say, *"I and My Father are one."* (John 10:30) When He said this, many tried to stone Him for what they considered blasphemy.

Another radical idea in the Good Shepherd sayings of John 10 is the concept of a "new flock," a non-Jewish flock: *"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."* We look forward to the full manifestation of this "one flock" during 2003. May it be the year of Jew and non-Jew coming together in Him.

"I AM The Resurrection And The Life"

Yeshua said that He was the resurrection and the life just before He raised His friend Lazarus from the dead. Since only God can restore life to the dead, Yeshua was saying that He was one with God. The resurrection of Lazarus substantiated the claim of this **I AM** proclamation.

As far as we have discovered (correct us if we are wrong), the New Covenant only mentions four people that "Jesus loved:" Martha, Mary, Lazarus and the Apostle John. It is interesting to note that three of these are involved in this resurrection narrative. Is love the motivation of resurrection of the dead? Can death, the strongest enemy, be defeated by anything else but love? Is love indeed more powerful than death? If God is love and God is more powerful than death, then YES, love is the greater force.

Yeshua said: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26) The Jewish hearers of Yeshua had certain connections in mind between a coming Messiah and the resurrection from the dead. For example, the Talmud says that Elijah, the forerunner of Messiah, will "hold in his hand the key to raising from the dead." (Sanhedrin 113a)

Yeshua had authority over death as well as the authority to give life, even eternal life. He raised the dead and was himself raised from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:10; 1 Corinthians 15:20). Because He lives, we shall also. Believe with us in 2003. No one knows what tomorrow holds but God. Hold His hand today, and He will take care of tomorrow!

"I AM The Way, The Truth And The Life"

"Ani ha derech (ah-nee ha DEH-wreck), **I am** the Way, had great meaning in the Hebrew mind. The phrase, "the way" was a common one in the Tenach. References to the way that God has chosen for His people Israel are found in Deut 9:12, 11:22-28, 30:15-16, Joshua 22:5, Psalm 119:1, and many more. Psalm 119 especially connects the Torah or the Word of the Lord with "the way." For example, verse 14 says, *"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches."* Yeshua is connecting Himself with the Torah, God's way, in this **I AM** saying. He is the living Word of God, the Word made flesh.

The truth is also connected with the Word of God. Yeshua, as the Truth, is the Torah personified.

In His great high priestly prayer of John 17, Yeshua prayed that God would sanctify us through the truth; *"Thy word is truth."* (John 17:17) Life was also connected with the Word of the Lord. The following words of Moses spoken to the Israelites show this connection: *"Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe all the words of this Law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life..."* (Deuteronomy 32:46-47)

"I AM the way" also refers to Yeshua's role as Messianic mediator. It is bold, exclusive, narrow and **true**. Yeshua can not be merely a great teacher with a claim like this. He said that He was the way to God, not only for Jews but for gentiles as well, even though His disciples had a hard time believing that non-Jews could receive a Jewish Messiah (see Acts 10-11,15). The Way is open to everyone who desires to have a personal relationship with God.

Yeshua's claim to be the THE LIFE was astounding and was repeated 40 times in John's gospel. Gottlieb Klein, the former Chief Rabbi of Stockholm, Sweden, pointed out that during the time of Yeshua there was great interest in the numeric values of the letters of words, and conclusions were often drawn from this. He felt there was a cryptic reference in the phrase "the Way, the Truth and the Life." Rabbi Klein pointed out that the initial letters of the Hebrew words for **way** (*derech*), **truth** (*emet*), and **life** (*hayyim*) are the same letters that make up the word **one** (*echad*) which implies the one true God. Is Yeshua using this phrase to point out the union between Himself and the Father? (An interesting possibility, but we believe that the message of Yeshua is much more obvious and straightforward.)

"I AM The True Vine"

Yeshua said: *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."* (John 15:1) He identifies His followers as the branches that exist for the purpose of bearing fruit. The vine is the source of life. It draws nutrients from the soil. The branch's job is to cling to the vine, and to yield to the vinedresser as he prunes and lifts the branches so that they do not drop down onto the soil and become fruitless.

According to Dr. Ron Moseley, there is an additional level of meaning in this proclamation that is only discerned as we understand the vine in a first century cultural context. Dr. Moseley tells us that at the time of Yeshua, a golden grapevine was draped across the four columns at the entrance to the Temple. This grapevine was said to be so beautiful that it was known as "a marvel of size and artistry to all who saw with what costliness of material it had been constructed" (from Josephus). People would make offerings to the Temple by purchasing a golden leaf, berry or cluster to be added to the vine. When Yeshua said that He was the "True Vine," He was making a contrast between Himself and this artificial vine. He was giving people an opportunity to offer themselves to a Vine that would result in real, lasting, spiritual fruit.

I AM Sayings For Believers In 2003

The Scriptures tell us that we are to be Yeshua representatives in the world. If He is light, we are to be light. If He is a door, we are to be doors also. We invite you to join us as we make seven proclamations concerning who we are in Messiah, based on who Yeshua is and what His will is for our lives:

"I am a daily partaker of the Bread of Life, Yeshua Ha Mashiach. I do not live by natural bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Yeshua is the living word of God who speaks words of life to me. He meets my every need. He is all I need, and satisfies the

deepest longings of my heart. In Yeshua I find contentment, satisfaction and fulfillment."

"I am a light in a dark world. Yeshua the Messiah has imparted His light to me and I will walk in that light. The light makes it possible for me to have sweet fellowship with other believers. I will not hide my light under a bushel but will allow it to shine for all to see through my faith, love and good works that God has already prepared for me to walk in. As I do His will, God, my Father will be glorified."

"I am a door of opportunity for those around me who do not yet know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Realizing that some of my friends, family members, neighbors, acquaintances and business associates go through so many destructive doors (materialism, humanism, extramarital affairs, cults, addictions, etc.), I am determined that my life will be a better choice for them. The sign on the door of my life reads: "Salvation through Yeshua, the Messiah." He has equipped me to help the lost find the way home."

"I am like a shepherd because God has given me a heart to nurture His sheep. Yeshua told me that if I love Him, I should feed His sheep. God will show me which sheep He wants me to touch for Him. His Spirit will show me how to minister to them. If I manage to help only one little lamb, God will be pleased by my effort. With the help of the Good Shepherd, I will lay down my life for others, as Yeshua did."

"I am a forever person. I have passed from death to life because I have received Yeshua, the Resurrection and the Life, into my heart. I am just passing through this world; my real home is in heaven. My heart is there and my treasure is there. I already have eternal life because the Ruach Ha Kodesh lives in me. Since resurrection life has been imparted to me, I am able to minister the same to others."

"I am a child of God who has come to the Father through the Son. Yeshua, the Way, the Truth and the Life, has shown me the path to follow through His Word. As I continue on this path I will experience the abundant life promised by Yeshua. I choose to walk according to the Word of God in 2003."

"I am attached to the true vine, Yeshua the Messiah. As I abide in Him, I will bear much lasting fruit. I choose to yield to God the Father, as He prunes me so that I bear even more fruit. I believe that God is a good God and that when He prunes me, it is not to harm, but rather to bless me. I want 2003 to be the most fruitful year I have ever had as a believer. I thank God by faith for the fruit even before I see it!"

Shalom,

Neil and Jamie