

## ISAIAH 7:14 – PART 1: AN ACCURATE GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS<sup>1</sup>

### I. INTRODUCTION

The verse Isaiah 7:14 is one of the most popular items in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. Commonly referred to as the "Virgin Birth proof text", missionaries identify this verse as the prophecy in the Christian "Old Testament" that foretold the future conception and birth of a child by a virgin, the "fulfillment" of which is described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with the accounts of Mary's conceiving a child of the Holy Spirit and giving birth to Jesus.

Two important aspects of Isaiah 7:14 are examined in this 2-part essay. In Part 1, a detailed and accurate grammatical analysis of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 is presented, which demonstrates how some Christian translators have mistranslated key terms in the verse in order to change its original context.

In Part 2, several popular Christian arguments that are often used by Christian missionaries in defense of their interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, the so-called "proof text" for the "Virgin Birth", are presented along with their respective refutations.<sup>2</sup>

### II. TEXTS, TRANSLATIONS, PERSPECTIVES, AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

#### A. The Hebrew text, English translations, and a Gospel author's application of Isaiah 7:14

Table II.A -1 shows side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14, as well as Matthew 1:23 in the New Testament. Matthew 1:23 is included since it contains the alleged quote of Isaiah 7:14 as part of the narrative that describes the conception and birth of Jesus. Both King James Version (KJV) translations also include the footnoted cross-references to each other.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in **SMALL CAPS** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter י is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ה is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized שְׁוָא (וְ) אֵיִשׁ – **SHVA NA** is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the **dagesh** (emphasis)

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 7:14 - Part 2: Refutation of Christian Apologetics - [http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Is714\\_2.pdf](http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Is714_2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Cross-referenced passage notations are according to the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

**Table II.A-1 – The Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 and other relevant texts**

Source	Passage Citation	Text
תנ"ך [T <sup>e</sup> NACH – Hebrew Bible]	ישעיה ז, יד	לְכֹן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיִלְדֵת בֵּן וְקָרְאת שְׁמוֹ עִמְנוּאֵל:
Author's Translation from the Hebrew	Isaiah 7:14	Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign: Here! The young woman is pregnant, and she shall give birth to a son; and you [young woman] shall call his name <i>Imanu'EL</i> .
King James Version "Old Testament"	Isaiah 7:14	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
King James Version New Testament	Matthew 1:23	Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel,* which being interpreted is, God with us.

Cross-referenced verses: \* Isaiah 7:14 \*\* Matthew 1:23

Even a cursory look at these three translations reveals significant differences between the Jewish translation and both KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament renditions. Several corresponding key terms and phrases in the four versions are shown in highlighted form.

## B. A survey of English translations of Isaiah 7:14

Following is a sample of Jewish and Christian English translations of Isaiah 7:14 and these are grouped in a specific manner that will facilitate the analysis.

### 1. Jewish translations

Table II.B.1-1 shows five renditions of Isaiah 7:14 from Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible, including respective footnotes where applicable. The terminology shown in **bold highlighted font** is of particular significance to the analysis presented in this essay.

**Table II.B.1-1 – Isaiah 7:14 as rendered by Jewish sources**

Source	Translation
ArtScroll Tanach (AST)** <sup>4</sup>	Therefore, my Lord Himself will give you <b>a sign</b> : Behold, <b>the maiden will become pregnant</b> and bear a son, <b>and she will name</b> him <b>Immanuel</b> .
The Jerusalem Bible (JBK) <sup>5</sup>	Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you <b>a sign</b> : Behold, <b>the young woman is with child</b> , and she will bear a son, <b>and shall call</b> his name 'Immanu-el'.
JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH (JPS)** <sup>6</sup>	Assuredly, my Lord will give you <b>a sign</b> of His own accord! Look, <b>the young woman is with child</b> and about to give birth to a son. <b>Let her name</b> him <b>Immanuel</b> . <sup>[g]</sup>
Judaic Classics Library (JCL) <sup>7</sup>	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you <b>a sign</b> ; Behold, <b>the young woman is with child</b> , and she will bear a son, <b>and shall call</b> his name <b>Immanu-El</b> .
Judaica Press Tanach (JPT)** <sup>8</sup>	Therefore, the Lord, of His own, shall give you <b>a sign</b> ; behold, <b>the young woman is with child</b> , and she shall bear a son, <b>and she shall call</b> his name <b>Immanuel</b> .

\* AST Commentary: Either Isaiah's (Rashi) or Ahaz' (Radak) young wife will bear a son and, through prophetic inspiration, will give him the name Immanuel, which means "God is With Us." thus in effect prophesying that Judah will be saved from the threat of Rezin and Pekah.

\*\* JPS Footnote: [g] Meaning "with us is God."

\*\*\* JPT commentary: Too detailed for purpose of this essay. It is summarized in the AST

## 2. Christian translations - Category I

Category I contains a collection of translations of Isaiah 7:14 from five Christian Bibles in which the renditions of the noun עִלְמָה (**a/MAH**) are generally consistent with the Jewish versions. This group of Christian translations, including respective footnotes, is shown in Table II.B.2-1. The terminology shown in **bold highlighted font** is of particular significance to the analysis presented in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> The Stone Edition Tanach, ArtScroll Series®, p. 964, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY (1996)

<sup>5</sup> The Jerusalem Bible, p. 485, Koren Publishers, Jerusalem, Israel (1998)

<sup>6</sup> JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH, p. 860, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA (2000)

<sup>7</sup> Judaic Classics Library, Version III, on CD-ROM by Davka Corporation [<http://www.davka.com>] (1999)

<sup>8</sup> The Book of Isaiah, Volume One, p. 67, The Judaica Press Inc., New York, NY (1992)

**Table II.B.2-1 – Isaiah 7:14 as rendered by Christian sources – Category I**

Source	Translation
Basic English Bible (BEB) <sup>9</sup>	For this cause the Lord himself will give you <b>a sign; a young woman is now with child</b> , and she will give birth to a son, <b>and she will give</b> him the name <b>Immanuel</b> .
The New English Bible (NEB) <sup>10</sup>	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you <b>a sign: A young woman is with child</b> , and she will bear a son, <b>and will call</b> him <b>Immanuel</b> .
New English Translation Bible (NET) <sup>*11</sup>	For this reason the sovereign master himself will give you <b>a confirming sign</b> . <sup>24</sup> Look, <b>this</b> <sup>25</sup> <b>young woman</b> <sup>26</sup> <b>is about to conceive</b> <sup>27</sup> and will give birth to a son. <b>You, young woman, will name</b> him <sup>28</sup> <b>Immanuel</b> . <sup>29</sup>
The New Jerusalem Bible (Catholic; NJB) <sup>12</sup>	The Lord will give you <b>a sign</b> in any case: It is this: <b>the young woman is with child</b> and will give birth to a son whom <b>she will call Immanuel</b> .
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) <sup>13</sup>	Therefore the Lord himself will give you <b>a sign</b> . Look, <b>the young woman is with child</b> and shall bear a son, <b>and shall name</b> him <b>Immanuel</b> .

\* The notes (tn - Translator's Note; sn - Study Note) in the NET Bible are informative:

**24tn** The Hebrew term אֵימָנֻל, "sign," can refer to a miraculous event (see v. 11), but it does not carry this sense inherently. Elsewhere in Isaiah the word usually refers to a natural occurrence or an object/person vested with special significance (see 8:18; 19:20; 20:3; 37:30; 55:13; 66:19). Only in 38:7-8, 22 does it refer to a miraculous deed that involves suspending or overriding natural laws. The sign outlined in vv. 14-17 involves God's providential control over events and their timing, but not necessarily miraculous intervention.

**25tn** Heb "the young woman." The Hebrew article has been rendered as a demonstrative pronoun ("this") in the translation to bring out its force. It is very likely that Isaiah pointed to a woman who was present at the scene of the prophet's interview with Ahaz. Isaiah's address to the "house of David" and his use of second plural forms suggests other people were present, and his use of the second feminine singular verb form ("you will name") later in the verse is best explained if addressed to a woman who is present.

**26tn** Traditionally, "virgin." Because this verse from Isaiah is quoted in Matt 1:23 in connection with Jesus' birth, the Isaiah passage has been regarded since the earliest Christian times as a prophecy of Christ's virgin birth. Much debate has taken place over the best way to translate this Hebrew term, although ultimately one's view of the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is unaffected. Though the Hebrew word used here (אִלְמָה, 'almah) can sometimes refer to a woman who is a virgin (Gen 24:43), it does not carry this meaning inherently. The word is simply the feminine form of the corresponding masculine noun אֵלֶם ('elem, "young man"; cf. 1 Sam 17:56; 20:22). The Aramaic and Ugaritic cognate terms are both used of women who are not virgins. The word seems to pertain to age, not sexual experience, and would normally be translated "young woman." The LXX translator(s) who later translated the Book of Isaiah into Greek sometime between the second and first century b.c., however, rendered the Hebrew term by the more specific Greek word παρθένος (parthenos), which does mean "virgin" in a technical sense. This is the Greek term that also appears in the citation of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23. Therefore, regardless of the meaning of the term in the OT context, in the NT Matthew's usage of the Greek term παρθένος clearly indicates that from his perspective a virgin birth has taken place.

<sup>9</sup> <http://unbound.biola.edu/>

<sup>10</sup> *The New English Bible*, p. 817, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press (1972)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bible.org/>

<sup>12</sup> *The New Jerusalem Bible*, p. 1200, Doubleday (1985)

<sup>13</sup> <http://biblestudytools.net/OnlineStudyBible/bible.cgi?new=1&word=therefore+the+lord+himself&section=1&version=nrs&language=en>

27tn Elsewhere the adjective הָרָה (harah), when used predicatively, refers to a past pregnancy (from the narrator's perspective, 1 Sam 4:19), to a present condition (Gen 16:11; 38:24; 2 Sam 11:5), and to a conception that is about to occur in the near future (Judg 13:5, 7). (There is some uncertainty about the interpretation of Judg 13:5, 7, however. See the notes to those verses.) In Isa 7:14 one could translate, "the young woman is pregnant." In this case the woman is probably a member of the royal family. Another option, the one followed in the present translation, takes the adjective in an imminent future sense, "the young woman is about to conceive." In this case the woman could be a member of the royal family, or, more likely, the prophetess with whom Isaiah has sexual relations shortly after this (see 8:3).

28tn Heb "and you will call his name." The words "young lady" are supplied in the translation to clarify the identity of the addressee. The verb is normally taken as an archaic third feminine singular form here, and translated, "she will call." However the form (קָרָאתָ, qara't) is more naturally understood as second feminine singular, in which case the words would be addressed to the young woman mentioned just before this. In the three other occurrences of the third feminine singular perfect of I קָרָא (qara', "to call"), the form used is קָרָאָה (qar'ah; see Gen 29:35; 30:6; 1 Chr 4:9). A third feminine singular perfect קָרָאתָ does appear in Deut 31:29 and Jer 44:23, but the verb here is the homonym II קָרָא ("to meet, encounter"). The form קָרָאתָ (from I קָרָא, "to call") appears in three other passages (Gen 16:11; Isa 60:18; Jer 3:4 [Qere]) and in each case is second feminine singular.

29sn The name Immanuel means "God [is] with us."

### 3. Christian translations - Category II

Category II contains a collection of translations of Isaiah 7:14 from five Christian Bibles in which the renditions of the noun עַלְמָה are generally inconsistent with the Jewish versions. This group of Christian translations, including respective footnotes, is shown in Table II.B.3-1. The terminology shown in **bold highlighted font** is of particular significance to the analysis presented in this essay.

**Table II.B.3-1 – Isaiah 7:14 as rendered by Christian sources – Category II**

Source <sup>14</sup>	Translation
American Standard Version (ASV)	Therefore the Lord himself will give you <b>a sign</b> : behold, <b>a virgin shall conceive</b> , and bear a son, <b>and shall call</b> his name <b>Immanuel</b> .
Darby Translation	Therefore will the Lord himself give you <b>a sign</b> : Behold, <b>the virgin shall conceive</b> and shall bring forth a son, <b>and call</b> his name <b>Immanuel</b> .
King James Version (KJV)	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you <b>a sign</b> ; Behold, <b>a virgin shall conceive</b> , and bear a son, <b>and shall call</b> his name <b>Immanuel</b> .
New International Version (NIV)*	Therefore the Lord himself will give you <sup>[1]</sup> <b>a sign</b> : <b>The virgin will be with child</b> and will give birth to a son, <b>and<sup>[2]</sup> will call</b> him <b>Immanuel<sup>[3]</sup></b> .
Young's Literal Translation (YLT)	Therefore the Lord Himself giveth to you <b>a sign</b> , Lo, <b>the Virgin is conceiving</b> , And is bringing forth a son, <b>And hath called</b> his name <b>Immanuel</b> ,

\* NIV footnotes:

[1] The Hebrew is plural.

[2] Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls *and he or and they*

[3] Immanuel means *God with us*.

#### 4. Comparing the treatment of key Hebrew vocabulary

##### a. Jewish translations

The Jewish translations (Table II.B.1-1) are **consistent** in correctly rendering the term **הַעַלְמָה** (*ha'almaḥ*) [where the definite article **-הַ** (*ha-*), is used with the noun **עַלְמָה**] as **the young woman** or **the maiden**, preserving the definite article in their renditions. This indicates that Isaiah spoke of *a specific* young woman known to both him, the speaker, and to King **AḤAZ** (**אַחָז**), the one being addressed.

The Jewish translations are generally **consistent** in their renditions of the adjective **הַרְהָה** (*haraḥ*) in this verse. Four of the five sources quoted in Table II.B.1-1 render the verb “to be” in the present tense<sup>15</sup> as **is** (with child, i.e., has already conceived), whereas the *ArtScroll Tanach* has it in the future tense as **shall** (be with child, i.e., will conceive in the future). From the context of the narrative, the latter rendition is understood as being an *imminent* action, something that is about to occur in the near future.

##### b. Christian translations

<sup>14</sup> All five translations in this category are available on the Internet at <http://www.biblegateway.com/>, as detailed below.

<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that, in Hebrew, the conjugated forms of the present tense of the root verb **היה**, the infinitive of which is **לְהִיוֹת** (*li'h'vot*), **to be**, is usually implied, not explicitly shown, in a sentence.

The Christian translations (Tables II.B.2-1 & Table II.B.3-1) are generally **inconsistent** in their renditions of the term הַעֲלָמָה – some use the correct terminology for the noun itself, i.e., **young woman** or **maiden**, others use **virgin**; and some preserve the definite article, **the**, while others change it to the indefinite article, **a**. In general, most *modern* Christian translators (generally, represented by Category I) have rendered the noun עֲלָמָה correctly.

The Christian translations are also generally **inconsistent** in their renditions of the adjective הָרָה in this verse. Among the five sources listed in Category I (Table II.B.2-1), four render the verb “to be” in the present tense, whereas the NET turns the adjective הָרָה into a verb that describes an imminent action. Among the five sources listed in Category II (Table II.B.3-1), three turn the adjective into a verb conjugated in the (indefinite) future tense, the YLT turns the adjective into a verb conjugated in the present participle, and the NIV uses the future tense of the verb “to be”.

### c. Jewish translations compared with Christian translations

Such comparison is not meaningful due to the diversity within each set of translations. In general, most *modern* Christian translations are closer to the correct Jewish translations, i.e., those that render the noun הַעֲלָמָה as **the young woman** or the maiden, the verb “to be” in the present tense, and הָרָה as **with child**. Older Christian translations generally use **virgin**, a term that would have required the Hebrew term for a virgin, בְּתוּלָה (**b<sup>e</sup>tulah**), without the definite article, to be in the original Hebrew text.

## C. The Christian perspective on Isaiah 7:14

The Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is based on the claim that it is a prophetic foretelling of the "Virgin Birth", the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus. Consequently, this verse in the Hebrew Bible is a foundational element of the Christian doctrine of the "Virgin Birth".

The following passage in the New Testament contains the account of the conception, birth, and naming of Jesus:

**Matthew 1:20-23(KJV) - (20) But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**

The relationship between this passage and the verse in Isaiah is established by the author in v. 23, which bears some resemblance to many Christian renditions of Isaiah 7:14. The author of the Gospel of Matthew states in v. 22 that the very next verse is the fulfillment of a prophecy, namely, that Jesus ('the Lord') will be born of a virgin, and that the name "**Emmanuel**" ('**God with us**'), according to the author of the Gospel of Matthew) indicates that he is, indeed, divine.

#### D. The Jewish perspective on Isaiah 7:14

The seventh chapter in the Book of Isaiah begins by describing the military crisis that was confronting King **AHAZ** (אֲחָז) of the Kingdom of Judah. Around the year 732 B.C.E., the House of David was facing imminent destruction at the hands of two warring kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel, led by King **PEqah** (פִּיִּזְיָה), and the Kingdom of Syria (Aram), led by King **R<sup>e</sup>TSIN** (רֵצִיזִין). These two armies had besieged Jerusalem. Isaiah records that the House of David and King **AHAZ** were gripped with fear. God sent the prophet Isaiah to reassure King **AHAZ** that divine protection was at hand – God would protect him and his kingdom and that their deliverance was assured, and these two hostile armies would fail in their attempt to subjugate Jerusalem.

It is clear from the narrative in this chapter, that Isaiah's declaration (Isaiah 7:14-16) was a prophecy about the unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem by the two armies from the north. The next two verses, Isaiah 7:15-16, state that, by the time this child (whose imminent birth was foretold in Isaiah 7:14) reaches the age of maturity ("... **he knows to reject bad and choose good** ..."), the kings of the two enemy nations will be gone; in fact, they will be killed. Two Biblical accounts, 2Kings 15:29-30 and 2Kings 16:9, record the contemporaneous fulfillment of this prophecy with these two kings being assassinated. With an understanding of the context of Isaiah 7:14 alone, it is evident that the name of the child in Isaiah 7:14, **Imanu'EL**, is a sign which points to the divine protection that King **AHAZ** and his people would enjoy from their otherwise certain demise at the hands of these two enemies. Clearly, Isaiah 7:14 is a near-term prophecy that is part of an historic narrative, and one that was fulfilled in the immediate time frame, not some seven-and-a-half centuries in the future.

#### E. Linguistic expansions of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14

The highlighted words in Table II.A-1, terms about which there exist major disagreements between Christian translations and interpretations and the Jewish translations and interpretations, are now examined more closely

##### 1. אֹת (ot) – A sign

The various applications of the noun אֹת in the Hebrew Bible are shown in Table II.E.1-1.

**Table II.E.1-1 – Applications of אֹת in the Hebrew Bible**

Hebrew Term	Meaning	#	Reference	Comments
אֹת	a visible sign, a signal	32	Isaiah 7:14, 38:22	
	an exemplary model, a marvelous deed	36	Isaiah 44:25	
	an example	9	Isaiah 19:20	
	a sign to determine times of festivals	1	Genesis 1:14	The luminaries in the sky
	an insignia	1	Numbers 2:2	The tribal banners

The significant attribute in all applications of אֹת is that each represents a physically perceptible mark or signal, i.e., each is audible, or visible, or can otherwise be sensed – none is hidden or imperceptible.

## 2. הַעֲלָמָה (*ha'alMAH*) – The young woman

The seven applications of the noun עֲלָמָה in the Hebrew Bible are shown in Table II.E.2-1.

**Table II.E.2-1 – Applications of עֲלָמָה in the Hebrew Bible**

Hebrew Term	Transliteration	Meaning	#	Reference	Comments
הַעֲלָמָה	<i>ha'alMAH</i>	the young woman	3	Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Isaiah 7:14	The noun עֲלָמָה always signifies a young woman of marriageable age.
בְּעֲלָמָה	<i>b'ealMAH</i>	with a young woman	1	Proverbs 30:19	
עֲלָמוֹת	<i>alamOT</i>	young women	2	Psalms 68:26; Song of Songs 1:3	Plural of עֲלָמָה
וְעֲלָמוֹת	<i>va'alamOT</i>	and young women	1	Song of Songs 6:8	

The noun עֲלָמָה has a corresponding masculine noun, עֶלֶם (*ElEM*), a young man (of marriageable age), which has two applications in the Hebrew Bible: הַעֲלָם (*ha'AlEM*), the young man, at 1 Samuel 17:56, and לְעֶלֶם (*la'ElEM*), to the young man, at 1 Samuel 20:22.

A related term found in the Hebrew Bible is עֲלוּמִים (*alumIM*), youth, young manhood, young womanhood, which appears in various declinations at, Isaiah 54:4; Psalms 89:46, 90:8; Job 20:11, 33:25.

A common application of עֲלָמָה in Modern Hebrew is in the formal introduction of a young woman, i.e., "הַעֲלָמָה", meaning, "Miss ...".

The salient point concerning these terms is that their common thread is *youth*, which associates these terms with a specific age group rather than with a state of sexual purity (i.e., virginity).

### 3. הָרָה (*hARAḤ*) – She [is] with child

The term הָרָה appears in the Hebrew Bible on 12 occasions – once as a verb in a metaphoric form that speaks of conceiving an idea, and 11 times as an adjective that describes a pregnant woman.

According to the Hebrew grammar, if the term הָרָה were a verb, then it would have to be the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person, singular, masculine, past tense conjugation of the root verb הרה, the infinitive of which is לְהָרוֹת (*laharot*), **to conceive** (for a female) or **to impregnate** (for a male). Consequently, when the term הָרָה is used in connection with a female, then that female is the noun in the sentence, the term הָרָה is the adjective that describes the noun (in this case, describes the female as pregnant). In such cases, the relevant verb is the present tense of the verb לְהִיּוֹת (*li'h'yot*), **to be**, which is implicit.<sup>16</sup> To help demonstrate this, the various conjugations of this root verb הרה are shown in Table II.E.3-1:<sup>17</sup>

**Table II.E.3-1 – The conjugations of the root verb הרה (infinitive לְהָרוֹת)**

Past Tense		Present Participles		Future Tense	
הָרִיתִי <sup>1</sup>	I impregnated (if spoken by a male) I conceived (if spoken by a female)	הוֹרֵה	(a male) impregnating	אֶהָרָה	I shall impregnate (if spoken by a male) I shall conceive (if spoken by a female)
הָרִיתָ	you impregnated (to a male)			תִּהְרָה	you will impregnate (to a male)
הָרִיתְּ	you conceived (to a female)	הוֹרָה	(a female) conceiving	תִּהְרִי	you will conceive (to a female)
הָרָה	<b>he impregnated (male only)</b>			יִהְרָה	he will impregnate
הָרְתָה <sup>3</sup>	she conceived (female only)			תִּהְרָה	she will conceive

1. Numbers 11:12. 2. Judges 13:3. 3. Genesis 16:4

<sup>16</sup> It is important to point out at this point that, in Hebrew, the conjugated forms of the present tense of the root verb היה (the infinitive of which is לְהִיּוֹת), is generally not explicitly shown in a sentence.

<sup>17</sup> A special note of thanks to Professor Mordochai Ben-Tziyyon, formerly Chairman of the T<sup>e</sup>NACH Department at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, for drawing my attention to the issue that plagues many translations of the term הָרָה and for providing this table of relevant conjugations of the root verb הרה. I added references to those terms used in the Hebrew Bible. There are several poetic forms of verb conjugations used in the Hebrew Bible, which are not included since these are not relevant to our analysis.

With the above important information in mind, Table II.E.3-2 shows the various applications of the actual term הָרָה in the Hebrew Bible.

**Table II.E.3-2 – Applications of the term הָרָה in the Hebrew Bible**

Hebrew term	Type	Meaning	#	Reference	Comments
הָרָה	verb	to conceive or scheme a thought that spawns in a person's mind	1	Psalms 7:15	A metaphoric applications of the verb in the masculine gender
	adjective	pregnant, with child	11	e.g., Exodus 21:22; Judges 13:5,7; <b>Isaiah 7:14</b> ; Jeremiah 31:7; Amos 1:13	A female that has conceived but has not yet given birth

As shown above, the verb and adjective are identically spelled. The only way to distinguish the verb הָרָה (when conjugated in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-person, singular, masculine, present tense) from the adjective הָרָה is via the context.

#### 4. וְקָרָאתְ (v<sup>e</sup>qarat) – And you shall call

The verb קָרָא (*qara*) appears (in various conjugations) 738 times in the Hebrew Bible. This verb is applied in several contexts, the most prominent of which are, **[to] call** (as in summon someone), **[to] announce**, **[to] read**, **[to] name**, as well as in several variations of these that are not important here. Table II.E.4-1 shows the verb forms from the Hebrew Bible which most closely resemble the term וְקָרָאתְ that appears in Isaiah 7:14.

**Table II.E.4-1 – Applications of וְקָרָאתְ in the Hebrew Bible<sup>18</sup>**

Hebrew Term	Meaning	#	Reference	Remarks
וְקָרָאתְ	and you shall name	3	Genesis 16:11; <b>Isaiah 7:14</b> , 60:18	Grammatically, this is a 2 <sup>nd</sup> -person, singular, feminine gender verbal conjugation. Yet, almost all translations render it as if conjugated in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> -person, singular, feminine gender.

The verb קָרָא (*qarat*) is actually conjugated in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, singular, feminine, past tense, i.e., **[you] named**. However, the conjunction ׀, **and**, can have an additional function, it changes the tense of the verb that it

<sup>18</sup> Two applications were not included. One instance at Jeremiah 3:4 of וְקָרָאתְ, **you called**, i.e., 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, singular, feminine, past tense conjugation, without the conversive-vav, at Jeremiah 3:4. The other is an instance of וְקָרָאתְ, at Deuteronomy 31:29, which derives from a root verb that is a homonym of קָרָא with a different meaning, **[to] encounter**, **[to] meet**. There is also an instance of וְקָרָאתְ of this homonym root verb at Jeremiah 44:23, but without the conversive-vav, which is also not included here.

modifies<sup>19</sup>. The net effect is that, in addition to functioning as the preposition **and**, it also reverses the tense of the verb – if the verb is conjugated in the past tense, the *conversive-vav* changes it to the future tense, and vice versa. The context of a Biblical passage determines when this "reversion" occurs. In the case of Isaiah 7:14, as it relates to the term וְקָרָאתָ, the tense is reversed and the term acquires the meaning **and you shall call**.

### 5. עִמָּנוּאֵל (*Immanu'EL*) - Immanuel

The name עִמָּנוּאֵל appears twice in the Hebrew Bible, at Isaiah 7:14, 8:8.<sup>20</sup> This name also appears once as a two-word phrase, עִמָּנוּ אֵל (*immanu EL*), at Isaiah 8:10 to convey, via the phrase כִּי עִמָּנוּ אֵל (*ki immanu EL*), **for God is with us**, the special significance of the name עִמָּנוּאֵל (see Isaiah 8:18).

**Table II.E.5-1 – Applications of עִמָּנוּאֵל in the Hebrew Bible**

Hebrew Term	Transliteration	Meaning	#	Reference	Remarks
עִמָּנוּאֵל	<i>immanu'EL</i>	God is with us	2	Isaiah 7:14, 8:8	Some texts use עִמָּנוּ אֵל
עִמָּנוּ אֵל	<i>immanu EL</i>		1	Isaiah 8:10	עִמָּנוּ אֵל is used uniformly in all Masoretic Text renditions

### F. Comparing two similar verses

The verses Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11, shown in Table II.F-, share several terms and have a similar grammatical structure. A comparison of these two verses provides additional insight into the Hebrew linguistics used in Isaiah 7:14.

<sup>19</sup> This grammatical operation is known in Hebrew grammar as וָ-הִפּוּךְ (vav-*ha'hipuch*), the **conversive-vav** [vav is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet].

<sup>20</sup> There are insignificant variations in the Hebrew texts: some use עִמָּנוּאֵל and others use עִמָּנוּ אֵל. It is worthwhile to note that our earliest text, the *Isaiah A Scroll* from Qumran Cave 1 (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>), has עִמָּנוּאֵל in all three locations [see <http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/qum-7.htm> & <http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/qum-8.htm>].

**Table II.F-1 – Comparing Isaiah 7:14 with Genesis 16:11**

A Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Isaiah 7:14	ישעיה ז, יד
Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign: Here! The young woman is with child, and she shall give birth to a son; and you [young woman] shall call his name Immanu'el.	לְכֹן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעֵלְמָה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֵּן וְקָרְאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּאֵל:
Genesis 16:11	בראשית טז, יא
And the angel of the Lord said to her: "Behold! You are with child, and you shall give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has noted your hardship.	וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה הִנֵּה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֵּן וְקָרְאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי-שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל-עֲנִיָּךְ:

Three corresponding phrases are highlighted in these two verses. Christian and Jewish translations are consistent on the **second phrase**, "and she/you shall give birth to a son", which involves the similar expressions וְיִלְדֶת (*v<sup>e</sup>yOLEdet*) for the "she" in Isaiah 7:14, and וְיִלְדֶת (*v<sup>e</sup>yOLAd<sup>e</sup>t*) for the "you" in Genesis 16:11.

This is also the situation with the **third phrase** in Genesis 16:11, in which the term וְקָרְאת (see Section II.E.4) is rendered as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, feminine conjugation in the future tense, "and you shall call his name Ishmael". The case with the **third phrase** in Isaiah 7:14 is complicated by the fact that, as noted in Table II.E.4-1, most translators render the same verb, וְקָרְאת, as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person, feminine conjugation in the future tense, while some (including the author), adhering to the Hebrew grammar, have it as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, feminine conjugation in the future tense. This difference can have an impact on how this verse is interpreted. The common translation as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person, feminine conjugation introduces ambiguity, whereas the grammatically accurate 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, feminine conjugation leaves no doubt that these events would occur contemporaneously, i.e., in the second half of the eighth century B.C.E.

The renditions of the adjective הָרָה in the **first phrase** show significant variation among the different translations. One of the key terms here is the Hebrew word הִנֵּה (*hINEI*) in Isaiah 7:14, which is most commonly used in the Hebrew Bible to draw attention to something and often also to create a condition of "here and now", as do its most commonly translated versions, **Behold!**, **Here!**, **Look!**. When this term appears in a sentence, an object is expected to follow, as in Isaiah 7:14, where הִנֵּה is followed by הָעֵלְמָה, "Here! The young woman [is]... ". The corresponding term in Genesis 16:11 is the Hebrew word הִנָּךְ (*hINACH*), which is the declination (or declension) of הִנֵּה in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person, singular, feminine gender, so that the object is already included in it, and it is translated as, "Behold! You [are]... ". In both verses here, a certain female is being spoken of (the young woman in Isaiah 7:14) or spoken to (Hagar in Genesis 16:11), and each is said to be pregnant, הָרָה. This is consistent with the rule of

Hebrew grammar that, whenever the term הַנִּהּ is used in reference to people, in any of its declined forms, the implication is that a specific person or a particular group of persons is being addressed or referred to by the speaker.

As an interesting follow-up to the survey of the various translations of Isaiah 7:14, side-by-side renditions of the phrase that refers to the respective female – the young woman (הַעַלְמָה) in Isaiah 7:14 and *HAGAR* (הַגֵּרָה) in Genesis 16:11 – in the 15 sources from which Isaiah 7:14 was quoted are shown in Table II.F-2.

**Table II.F-2 – Comparison of Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11**

	Source	Isaiah 7:14	Genesis 16:11	Present	Future
Jewish	AST	... will become pregnant*	... will conceive*		✓**✓*
	JBK	... [is] with child	... [art] with child	✓✓	
	JPS	... [is] with child	... [are] with child	✓✓	
	JCL	... [is] with child	... [are] with child	✓✓	
	JPT	... [is] with child	... will conceive*	✓	✓*
Category I	BEB	... [is] with child	... [art] with child	✓✓	
	NEB	... [is] with child	... [art] with child	✓✓	
	NET	... is about to conceive**	... [are now] pregnant	✓	✓**
	NJB	... [is] with child	... have conceived	✓✓	
	NRSV	... [is] with child	... have conceived	✓✓	
Category II	ASV	... shall conceive***	... [art] with child	✓	✓***
	Darby	... shall conceive***	... [art] with child	✓	✓***
	KJV	... shall conceive***	... [art] with child	✓	✓***
	NIV	... [will be] with child***	... [are now] with child	✓	✓***
	YLT	... is conceiving	... art conceiving	✓✓	

\* Per some Jewish Sages, this signifies the imminent future, an event about to occur

\*\* This modern Christian translation follows the style of some Jewish Sages

\*\*\* Per Christian theology, this signifies the distant future, some 730 years in the future

Given that, with respect to the time frame in question, the variations in the respective renditions by the Jewish and Christian “**Category I**” translations are inconsequential, it is evident that these two sets of translations are consistent in their renditions of both Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11. On the other hand, with the exception of the YLT, there is unambiguous evidence of Christological bias among the Christian “**Category II**” translations in their renditions of Isaiah 7:14 relative to Genesis 16:11 (the latter has no Christological value). This bias is also evident in the renditions of הַעַלְמָה as a **virgin** by this group of translations.

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