

THE VIRGIN CONCEPTION OF MESSIAH AND ISAIAH 7:14

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Does God speak of a virgin conceiving and bearing a child? Many Jewish leaders (as well as liberal Christians) have maligned the virgin conception and birth of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) that the prophet Isaiah seems to speak of. They laugh and say,

‘It’s not only impossible, but that isn’t what Isaiah meant at all! The word that Christians translate as *virgin* doesn’t mean virgin, but *a young woman*,’ implying that she had known a man.

It’s easy to understand how they can think that way with rabbis like Rosenberg supplying the scholarship behind it. Rosenberg states,

‘the translation, ‘virgin,’ for עַלְמָה (*almah*) is completely erroneous. The word is used for a young woman, regardless of whether she is a virgin or not.’¹

Rosenberg represents the traditional position of Jewish thought, but the Hebrew Bible disagrees with his assessment of *almah*. There is no place in the *Tanach* (Old Testament; Hebrew Bible) where *almah* (or its plural) is used that refers to a young woman who is married or has known a man. Rosenberg presents an unbiblical position when he states that *almah* can be something other than a virgin.

The Talmud speaks of how Mary, the mother of Yeshua, came to have him. In Shabat 104b, note 2 (Soncino Edition) it states that Miryam (Mary) had sex with many men. Sanhedrin 102a says that Miryam was a whore. These malicious lies are designed to shock any Jew reading them into thinking that Yeshua couldn’t possibly be the Messiah. The Law of Moses states that no one of *illegitimate* birth can enter the Assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:2). How, then, could one born from a whore be the Messiah?! This is certainly not what the New Covenant presents about Miryam. Could it be that the Rabbis have intentionally maligned Miryam to cause Jews not to consider Yeshua as the Messiah? The prophecy in question states:

‘Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign: behold, the *young woman* (עַלְמָה *almah*) shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name *Immanuel*’ (Is. 7:14).²

Almah: Another Word for Virgin

There are only three other places in Scripture, aside from Is. 7:14, where *almah* is used. The first time we see it it’s translated as either ‘young maiden’ or ‘young woman’ with the meaning being one that is a virgin. When Abraham’s servant is sent to get a wife for Isaac, he comes to a well and says,

“behold, I am standing by the spring, and may it be that the *maiden* (*almah*) who comes out to draw, and to whom I say, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your jar,’” (Gen.

¹ Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. one (New York: The Judaica Press, 1992), p. 67.

² *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, thirteenth printing, 1982), p. 965. For *Immanuel*, note *a* states, ‘...God is with us.’

24:43).

Was Rebecca already married? Had she known a man before? Rebecca was a young woman who was a virgin and *almah* perfectly described her state. Risto Santala writes,

“The word *alma* used by Isaiah does unquestionably also mean ‘a young woman’. Isaac’s bride Rebecca was an *alma* (Gen. 24:43), but she was also a *betulah*, ‘a virgin; no man had ever lain with her’ (v. 16).”³

The very first time that Scripture presents *almah* it speaks of this woman as being a virgin. *Almah* is never used of any woman who is married or who had had sexual relations with men (i.e. a whore). Santala goes on to say that the *Zohar*, the mystical ‘Bible’ of Judaism, interestingly enough says that the Messiah would be born “from a ‘closed womb’.”⁴

Closed wombs were notoriously present in the birth of the Jewish nation, as seen in the Mothers of Israel: Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel. All were barren, or had closed wombs, until Yahveh *miraculously* opened them. Alfred Edersheim states that the miracles of Israel were a picture of what would happen to Messiah and what He would do for Israel:

“perhaps the most valuable element in Rabbinic commentation on Messianic times is that in which, as so frequently, it is explained, that all the miracles and deliverances of Israel’s past would be re-enacted, only in a much wider manner, in the days of the Messiah. Thus the whole past was symbolic, and typical of the future...It is in this sense that we would understand the two sayings of the Talmud: ‘All the prophets prophesied only the days of the Messiah’ (Sanh. 99a) and, ‘The world was created only for the Messiah’ (Sanh. 98b).”⁵

If the deeds of Israel were to be reflected and amplified in Messiah, why shouldn’t we have expected him to have come from a ‘closed womb’? More on this in the section, *Closed Wombs*.

Another instance where *almah* is used is the time when baby Moses, about three months old (Ex. 2:2), was floating down the Nile in his hovercraft. When Miryam, the older sister of Moses, suggests to Pharaoh’s daughter that she would get a woman who could nurse the baby, Scripture calls Miryam an *almah*.⁶ No one would suggest that Miryam had already known a man. She was a virgin. The third and last instance of *almah* is found in Proverbs 30:18-19:

‘There are three things that are too amazing for me; four things that I don’t understand: The way of the eagle in the sky; the way of the snake on the rock; the way of the ship in the heart of the sea; and the way of a man with a *maid*’ (*almah*).’⁷

³ Risto Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings* (Jerusalem: Keren Ahvah Meshihit, 1992), p. 195.

⁴ Ibid., p. 194. *The Zohar* on Is. 9:6 and the Midrash on Ruth, ‘one of the oldest’ sources for this.

⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 114.

⁶ Ex. 2:8; see 2:4, 7 for it being the sister of Moses; i.e. Miryam. Also, Num 12:1-15; 26:59; 1st Chron. 6:3; Micah 6:4.

⁷ Rosenberg, *The Book of Isaiah*, p. 67. Rosenberg states that this verse is proof that *almah* relates to a young woman who is not a virgin. He offers no reason why. He also writes that the masculine for *almah* is not necessarily a man who is a virgin, with this being ‘additional proof’ that *almah* can mean a young woman who is not a virgin, but these ‘proofs’ fail to satisfy even the cursory mind, especially as there is no Scripture that states that

In this instance of *almah* one would be hard pressed to authoritatively state that the woman is anything but a virgin. Certainly no one can emphatically declare that the ‘maid’ is a woman that has known a man. These are all the times (four, including Is. 7:14), that *almah* is used in the Hebrew Bible. Of these four instances, one literally declares an *almah* to be a virgin (Gen. 24:16, 43), while another, Ex. 2:2, presents the sister of Moses as such. The third, Prov. 30:18-19 lends itself to the understanding that the young woman is a virgin and Is. 7:14 cements that position.

The Plural of Almah

The plural of *almah*, relating to women (עַלְמוֹת *alamot*) is used in only three places. Here, too, the word should be translated as *virgins*, although it’s not as definitive as was the case with the singular:

‘because of this, the virgins⁸ (*alamot*) love you’ (Song of Songs 1:3).

‘Sixty are the queens; eighty are the concubines; and virgins⁹ (*alamot*) without number’ (Song of Songs 6:8).

‘The singers went on, the musicians after them, among virgins (*alamot*), playing tambourines’ (Hebrew for Psalm 68:26; English v. 25).

The text for the Song of Songs 1:3 points toward ‘virgins.’ Why would the King want young women who were married or whores ‘loving him’? The idea applies to virgins seeking the king and Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki: 1040-1105), whom many Orthodox Jews venerate, affirms this by stating in his comment on this verse “‘that *alamot* means, ‘b’tulot’ (*virgins*).”¹⁰

The text for Song of Songs 6:8 naturally lends itself to *alamot* being virgins as after ‘queens and concubines’ the only other category left would be virgins or whores.

The text of Ps. 68:25 reminds one of the virgins who danced along the road every year at the feast in Shiloh (Judges 21:19-23), whom the sons of Benjamin snatched away for wives. Obviously, they were virgins.

The argument can be made that *alamot* can’t explicitly be seen as a reference to virgins, but it cannot authoritatively be proven that any of them have known men, either. The texts does suggest that these women

almah is a woman who is not a virgin. His other arguments (e.g. that Isaiah’s prophecy can only relate to Isaiah’s time, and therefore, cannot speak of the birth of Yeshua 700 years later) are not worthy of serious consideration. Prophecy, by it’s very nature, can relate to a ‘present’ time and also to an event in the future. Examples of this are the many times God speaks of destroying Israel and Judah (and finally does so in 721 B.C.E. and 586 B.C. E. respectively), but also speaks of the Coming Day of the Lord, in terms of the Final Judgment (see, the Day of the Lord, Is. 24:21; 30:26; 61:2; Jer. 46:10; Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18; Obad. 1:15; Zeph. 2:3, etc.). As for prophecy concerning more than one person, Isaiah speaks about the King of Tyre, but it transcends that king and speaks of Satan (Ezk. 28:12-19) as the Cherub in the Garden of Eden in whom iniquity was found in.

⁸ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), p. 513. For Songs of Songs 1:3, Delitzsch translates *alamot* as virgins and says they are ‘maidens growing to maturity.’ The NKJV and the KJV also translates *alamot* here as *virgins*.

⁹ Ibid., p. 579. Delitzsch translates *alamot* as *virgins* here also, as does the NKJV and the KJV.

¹⁰ David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), p. 7.

are virgins. These are all the times where either *almah* or its plural, *alamot*, is used in relation to women. From the Hebrew word itself and the Hebrew texts *almah* is always used to refer to a young maiden who is *obviously* a virgin, and therefore, this is the way Is. 7:14 should be primarily understood. There is no compelling Scriptural reason to see it otherwise.

Rashi and Others on the Virgin Conception of Isaiah 7:14

Lexicographer Benjamin Davidson defines *almah* as ‘a maiden, virgin, marriageable, but not married’, ‘so in the seven passages of its occurrences’ in the Old Testament.¹¹ Rashi wrote,

“Behold, the *almah* shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name *Immanu’el*.’ This means that our Creator will be with us. And this is the sign: the one who will conceive is a girl (*na’arah*) who never in her life has had intercourse with any man. Upon this one shall the Holy Spirit have power.”¹²

David Stern, quoting Michael Rydelnik, states that,

“Cyrus Gordon, a greatly respected Jewish scholar who does not believe in the virgin birth, holds that the cognate languages demonstrate that in Isaiah 7:14 *almah* should be translated ‘virgin’.”¹³

Stern also writes that ‘a possible reason for Isaiah’s using the word *almah* instead of *b’tulah* is that in Biblical (as opposed to later) Hebrew,’

“*b’tulah* does not always unambiguously mean ‘virgin,’ as we learn from Joel 1:8: ‘Lament like a *b’tula* girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.’ And Deut. 22:19 ‘speaks of a woman after her wedding night as a *b’tula*.’”¹⁴

Risto Santala relates that world renowned Israeli Professor David Flusser, on a visit to Finland in the summer of 1984, was asked for his views on the New Testament’s most difficult questions. Of the resurrection of Jesus he stated categorically,

‘It is a historical fact’. ‘I was not there at the tomb myself, of course, but the resurrected Jesus did manifest himself to his disciples.’

‘And the Virgin Birth?’

‘Nor does that go against Jewish thinking.’¹⁵

Santala goes on to state that Abraham Even Shushan,

“the compiler of a five-volume Modern Hebrew dictionary and an analytical concordance of the Old Testament showing every word in every one of the forms in which it appears, explains that *alma* means primarily a young girl ‘before marriage’.¹⁶ It is no doubt

¹¹ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 601. He lists the seven passages as Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; Is. 7:14; Ps. 68:26; Prov. 30:19; Song of Songs 1:3; 6:8.

¹² Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 6-7. His cite is from Mikra’ot Gedolot, ad loc.

¹³ Ibid., p. 7. See *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXI, 2 (April 1953), p. 106.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁵ Santala, *The Messiah in the Old Testament in the Light of Rabbinical Writings*, p. 194.

with this in mind that 200 years before Christ, the Septuagint translated Isaiah 7:14 with the Greek word *parthenos*, which means ‘virgin’.¹⁷

From many noted Jewish authorities such as Rashi, David Flusser and Even Shushan, Isaiah’s use of *almah* is seen without question, reservation or doubt, to be a virgin.

The Septuagint and Isaiah 7:14

The Septuagint, a Greek version of the Tanach, translated by Jewish Sages 150 to 250 years before Jesus was born, is a valuable tool for helping us to understand how the ancient Jewish people of that time understood the Hebrew Scriptures. For *almah* in Isaiah 7:14, the Jewish translators used the *specific* Greek word for virgin¹⁸ (*parthenos παρθενος*).¹⁹ Therefore, before any controversy about Jesus being born of a virgin came into Christian understanding, the authoritative Jewish version of the Greek Old Testament declared that ‘the *virgin* would conceive and bear a son, and that he would be *God with us*.’ The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* states that some translators,

“‘interpret Mt 1:22-23’ (‘the virgin shall be with child’), ‘as being simply a comment by Matthew, but it is more reasonable to consider that the argument that convinced Joseph was the fact, pointed out to him by the angel, that such an event had already been predicted by Isaiah’ (7:14). *There is no instance where it can be proved that ‘alma’ designates a young woman who is not a virgin.* The fact of virginity is obvious in Gen 24:43 where *alma* is used of one who was being sought as a bride for Isaac. Also obvious is Ex 3:8 (*sic* 2:8. Song 6:8 refers to three types of women, two of whom are called queens and concubines. It could be only reasonable to understand the name of the third group, for which the plural of ‘*alma*’ is used, as meaning ‘virgins.’ In Ugaritic the word is used in poetic parallel with the cognate of *betula*.’²⁰

The Miraculous Sign of Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah’s prophecy recognizes the impossibility of a virgin conceiving, but offsets it with the understanding that it would be a miracle:

‘Therefore the Lord *Himself* shall give you a *sign*: (אִתּוֹ *oat*). Behold! The virgin shall conceive and bear a son’ (Is. 7:14).

The Hebrew word for ‘sign’ means ‘miracle.’²¹ Now, it’s no miracle for a ‘young maiden’ to conceive.

¹⁶ Ibid., note 55: ‘See the dictionary *Milon Hadash* p. 1189.’

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 194-195.

¹⁸ Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, sixth printing, February, 1997, originally published in London, 1851), p. 842.

¹⁹ Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 314. ‘a virgin, maid’, ‘chaste’.

²⁰ R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. II (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 672. UT 19: no. 1969.

²¹ Ibid., vol. I, p. 18. Most of the 80 occurrences of ‘*oat*’ refer to miraculous signs: all the plagues of Egypt; Isaiah 7:11, 14; the shadow advancing on the palace steps for King Hezekiah: 2nd Kings 20:9; Is. 38:7), etc. ‘*Oat*’ is

Young maidens who are married conceive all the time, but it's a miracle (*oat*) for a virgin to conceive. Is it coincidence, deliberate fraud or divine inspiration that the New Covenant proclaims Miryam to be a virgin? Luke records:

“The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Miryam, for you have found favor with God. And behold! You will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name Him, Yeshua. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God and the Lord God will give Him the Throne of His Father David and He will reign over the House of Jacob forever and His Kingdom will have no end!’ Miryam said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a *virgin*?’²² The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Spirit of the Holy One will come upon you, and the Power of the Most High God will overshadow you. For that reason, the Holy Child shall be called the Son of God’” (Luke 1:30-35).

Some would say that the only miracle being spoken of by Isaiah is that of the threatening armies devastating Judah. In time they would leave. This may be part of the ‘immediate’ fulfillment of the prophecy, but its fulfillment doesn’t exhaust God’s Word to Isaiah. Note well that the word for miracle is directly in front of the *almah* conceiving and not the relief of Jerusalem (v. 16):

Is. 7:14: ‘Therefore the Lord *Himself* shall give you a *sign*. Behold! The virgin shall conceive and bear a son’.

Is. 7:16: ‘For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.’

With the word for miracle *oat* found directly in front of ‘the virgin’ conceiving in v. 14, it speaks of the miracle relating to the virgin, and not what will happen two verses later. That the prophecy also relates to Isaiah’s time is part of the beauty of prophecy being able to speak to more than one event.

Franz Delitzsch translates *almah* as ‘virgin’²³ for Is. 7:14 and states that it is ‘applied to one fully mature, and approaching the time of her marriage.’²⁴ He goes on to say,

‘it is also certain that the child who was to be born was the Messiah,’ ‘no other than that ‘wonderful’ heir of the throne of David, whose birth is hailed with joy in ch. 9’. ‘It was the Messiah whom the prophet saw here as about to be born, then again in ch. 9 as actually born, and again in ch. 11 as reigning—an indivisible triad of consolatory images in three distinct states’.²⁵

Delitzsch saw a prophetic and progressive ladder, so to speak, with chapters 7, 9 and 11 speaking of the miraculous conception, birth, and reign of Messiah:

used as ‘sign’ in both a concrete sense, as when it is used as a banner for each Tribe (Num. 2:2ff), and in a conceptual sense, when it is used referring to the sign of Noah, the rainbow (Gen. 9:12-13, 17), circumcision (Gen. 17:11) and the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13, 17; Ezk. 20:12), etc.

²² Literally, “But Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be since I do not know a man?’” Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators, J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), p. 196, Luke 1:34. The basis for this interlinear is The United Bible Societies’ *Third Corrected Edition of the Greek New Testament*. This is the same text as the 26th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* by Kurt Aland, M. Black, C. Martini, A. Wikgren and Bruce Metzger.

²³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, p. 140.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

1. Conception: With Is. 7:14, the miraculous conception and divine Name of *Immanuel* (God is with us) is spoken of.
2. Birth: With Is. 9:6, the child born will be a son, and his other names or titles would be Wonderful Counselor (which speaks of the miraculous or divine Counselor, Yahveh, specifically in terms of ‘signs and wonders’²⁶ that God performed through Moses against Egypt); the Mighty God, the Eternal Father, and the Prince of Peace. The government resting on his shoulders suggests that he is the King of Israel, the Messiah, and this is solidified by v. 7 stating that he will have the ‘Throne of David,’ upholding it with ‘justice and righteousness... forever.’ Coupled with v. 2, that the people that walked in darkness would see a ‘great Light’, the divine reality of Messiah Yeshua is presented.²⁷
3. The child: Is. 11:1-5 states the child will come from Jesse (the father of King David; another reference to his being the Messiah), and upon this child the Spirit of Yahveh will ‘rest,’ reside and dwell in. It’s here that the Spirit is spoken of as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge and the fear of Yahveh. This son will not judge by what he sees, but by righteousness, God’s Righteousness and the poor and afflicted will receive righteous judgments, righteousness and faithfulness being his ‘belt’ or what girds him.

Something that many would overlook or render superficial is the name or character (inherent in Hebrew names) that the child would be given.²⁸ *Immanuel* literally means, ‘With us (is) God.’ Delitzsch relates this, and Messiah’s nature, and the miracle involved in his conception saying,

‘the incarnation of Deity was unquestionably a secret that was not clearly unveiled in the Old Testament, but the veil was not so thick but that some rays could pass through. Such a ray, directed by the spirit of prophecy into the mind of the prophet, was the prediction of *Immanuel*. But if the Messiah was to be *Immanuel* in this sense, that He would Himself be *El* (God), as the prophet expressly affirms, His birth must also of necessity be a wonderful or miraculous one.’²⁹

Like the conception of the children from the Mothers of Israel, similar would be the conception of the

²⁶ Ex. 7:3; Dt. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11; Neh. 9:10; Ps. 135:9; Jer. 32:20-21; Acts 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Rom. 15:19; 2nd Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4, etc.

²⁷ The theme that Yahveh is Light is seen in the Tabernacle, where no artificial light was needed in the Holy of Holies, as Yahveh Himself was there; and at the Burning Bush when Moses met Yahveh (Ex. 3:1-4:17), and at Mt. Sinai when Yahveh descends upon it in Fire (and Light; Ex. 19:16ff), and in the Pillar of Fire that gave Light by night to the Sons of Israel (Ex. 13:21; 14:20, etc.). It is also spoken of by Yahveh, that He is Light in Is. 10:17; 60:19-20; Ezk. 1:4. In Is. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4, and Messiah is spoken of as that Light, also. In Mt. 4:16; 17:2; Lk. 2:32; Jn. 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46; 2nd Cor. 4:6; 1st Jn. 1:5; 2:8; Rev. 21:22-24, Messiah Yeshua is either saying that He is the Light or others are saying it about Him.

²⁸ There are only five other times in the *Tanach* where God gives a new name to someone. Gen. 17: 5 states that God changed Abram (father of a people) to Abraham (father of many people). Gen. 17:15 speaks of God changing Sarai (contentious) to Sarah (princess). Gen. 32:28 has God changing Jacob (conniver, deceiver), to Israel (one who wrestles with God and man and finds favor with both). Num. 13:16 relates how Moses, under divine inspiration, changes Hoshea (salvation) to Joshua (Yahveh is salvation). In 2nd Sam. 12:24-25 God gave another name to Solomon (peace). He called him Yedidiyah (Jedidiyah in English), which means, ‘Beloved of Yahveh,’ a picture of Messiah Yeshua. yet, in all these there is nothing that approaches the uniqueness of Isaiah 7:14 speaking of *Immanuel* (with us is God).

²⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, p. 143

Messiah from the womb of the virgin. Three of the four Mothers of Israel weren't able to conceive until Yahveh opened their wombs, presenting a prophetic picture for how Messiah would come.

Closed Wombs

The virgin conception of Yeshua was a miracle, but it was not without its symbols and types in the *Tanach*, as the ancient Rabbis spoke of (Edersheim above). Interestingly enough, three of the four Mothers of Israel were utterly barren until God *miraculously* opened their wombs. Sarah, Abraham's wife, gave birth at 90 years of age (Gen. 17:17, etc.), an incredible miracle if ever there was one. Rebecca and Rachel, although not as old as Sarah, nevertheless could not conceive until Yahveh intervened after many years (Gen. 25:20-26;³⁰ 30:22-24), and the great prophet Samuel was also born from a closed womb (1st Sam. 1:5).

Unquestioningly, though, the greatest of these 'visitations' was Sarah. She was far too old to conceive in a natural way. Not only does God reveal that He is the One who miraculously opens the womb, but He also prefigures in our Mother, Sarah, what He would do for Miryam and His Son, Yeshua (Ps. 2:2, 6-7). It's Sarah's miraculous conception that literally allows our Jewish people to come into existence and it's Miryam's miraculous conception that allows for the Israel of God to come into existence (Gal. 6:16). If God had not miraculously opened Sarah's closed womb there would not have been a nation called Israel. Why should not the Messiah's birth, which would bring forth an Israel for God made up of Jew and Gentile (Is. 42:6; 49:6, etc.) who love Him and walk in His Ways, also begin similarly? Isaac, Sarah's son, is not only seen as a picture of Yeshua in his miraculous birth, but also in his character of absolute submission to his father's will, even though it meant dying as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). In this, he, and his father Abraham, present what our heavenly Father and His Son, Yeshua, would go through approximately 2,000 years later, in the very same vicinity.

Conclusion

Isaiah's use of *almah* is one of the most controversial passages of Scripture. Having looked at all the places where the word is found in Scripture, we saw that it spoke of a young woman who was a virgin, and never one who had known a man. A number of authorities confirmed that *almah* in Is. 7:14 should be translated as *virgin*.

Benjamin Davidson noted that all seven passages in Scripture spoke of *virgins*. Rashi obviously thought that 'the Creator will be with us' as the name of the child implied (*Immanuel*). He also said that the young maiden was one who 'never in her life has had intercourse with any man.'

Cyrus Gordon believed that Isaiah was speaking of a virgin, stating that the 'cognate languages demonstrate' this. David Stern revealed that Isaiah may have used *almah* instead of *betulah* as the latter sometimes denotes a married woman.

Prof. Flusser wasn't ashamed to admit that the virgin conception was Jewish. Franz Delitzsch translated *almah* as *virgin*, and *Even Shushan's* dictionary declared that *almah* was a young girl 'before marriage.'

³⁰ Note well that Isaac married Rebecca when he was 40 years old and the boys were born when he was 60. It states that she was so upset at not conceiving that Isaac intervened for her with prayer so she would conceive. Rebecca was barren for 20 years.

The Septuagint's use of *parthenos*, 200 years before Yeshua would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Heb. v. 1; Matt. 2:1; Lk. 2:1-15), further cemented the understanding that *almah* in Is. 7:14 was a virgin. The ancient Rabbis thought that the Messiah would be born from a virgin.

The closed wombs of the Mothers of Israel conceptually revealed that what was to happen with Messiah, similarly had already happened to others. 'Closed wombs' were not a novelty for Israel, but a central reality for the miraculous birth of our people. For Sarah, it was truly impossible for her to conceive, and isn't that what many say about Miryam's conception? Yet, Isaiah wrote that the virgin conceiving would be a miracle or 'sign' from Yahveh (7:14).

When Jewish leaders such as Rosenberg declare in their treatment of Isaiah 7:14 that the word *almah* means, 'a young woman, regardless of whether she is a virgin or not',³¹ they are being both dishonest and deceptive. I don't expect them to know much about the Greek Septuagint, but I do expect their knowledge of Hebrew and Rashi to be fairly adequate. For them to present *almah* and say that it doesn't mean *virgin* falls far below 'shoddy scholarship.' It is nothing less than manipulative.

It is a grave and grievous sin that millions of Jewish people over the centuries have had to rely on this type of 'instruction' concerning Isaiah 7:14. This 'slight of hand' intentionally distorts the Word of God away from Yeshua. When the Rabbis lie about God's Word, where can a Jewish person turn to find God's Truth about Messiah? These Rabbis are actually fighting and rebelling against God Himself and keeping Jewish people away from the Life that only Messiah Yeshua can give. It isn't easy to overcome deep seated prejudices about Yeshua, but what value is there in holding onto religious ideas that are anti-God?

The miracle is that God became Man and dwelt among us. Why? To become a sacrifice that would cleanse us of our sins, make us pure in His eyes and give us eternal life. Too hard to believe? Just ask Abraham and Sarah about Isaac.³²

³¹ Rosenberg, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. one, p. 67.

³² Gen. 17:15-22; 18:9-15; 21:1-7; 22:1-18.

Revised on 26 April 2015.