

# Chapter 11

## The Verbs in Isaiah 7:14

This one verse has received more discussion than any other passage in the OT, yet without any consensus emerging among commentators.  
--Gordon J. Wenham

### Introduction

The verbs in Isaiah 7:14, especially the time indicated by two of them, play a major role in determining the correct interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. However, there has been considerable disagreement among commentators on how to parse the verbs in this text. This chapter presents an analysis of the verbs, or verb-like words, in Isaiah 7:14 in order to construct a foundation for the interpretation of this verse. There are four of them:

אוֹת	לְכֶם	הוּא	אֲדֹנָי	יִתֵּן	לְכֵן
a sign	to you	he	Adonai	[verb 1]	Therefore
		(himself) <sup>1</sup>			

הִנֵּה	הָעַלְמָה	הָרָה	וְיִלְדֶת	בֵּן	וְקָרָאת	שְׁמוֹ	עִמָּנוּ	אֵל
Behold	(a/the) maiden	[verb 2]	[verb 3]	a son	[verb 4]	his name	Immanuel	

Chapter 10 concluded that עַלְמָה (*almah*) means *young unmarried girl*. Probably the English word that comes closest to this is *maiden*. The debate on whether the girl in Isaiah 7:14 was a virgin is addressed in Chapter 13. In this chapter it is convenient simply to use *maiden* as the English translation.

### The English Versions

Before examining the verbs used in Isaiah 7:14, it is helpful to list for reference the translations of this verse in the major English versions, both Jewish and Christian.

#### The Four Main Jewish Versions

*Jewish Bible 1917:*

Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

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1 The separate pronouns like הוּא ("he") can also be used to add emphasis to the subject; see *GKC*, §§ 135a, n. 1, and 135c.

*Jewish Bible 1985:*

Assuredly, my Lord will give you a sign of His own accord! Look, the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel.

*Jerusalem Bible:*

Therefore the LORD [*sic*]<sup>2</sup> himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and shall call his name 'Immanu'el.

*Stone Edition:*

Therefore, my Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the maiden will become pregnant and bear a son, and you will name him Immanuel.

Note that two of these translations use the future tense for the conception (*Jewish Bible 1917* and *Stone Edition*), and two use the present tense (*Jewish Bible 1985* and *Jerusalem Bible*).

### A Sampling of the Christian Versions

*KJV:*

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

*ASV:*

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

*NIV:*

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

*NASB:*

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Note that among the Christian translations, all four use the future tense for the conception.

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2 Whether this should be rendered *LORD* (Yahweh) or *Lord* (Adonai) is not a question of translation but one of manuscript. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), I:284, n. 31, has this note: "1Q [1QIsaa, one of the seven Dead Sea Scrolls recovered in 1947] and some mss. have the Tetragrammaton [YHWH (Yahweh)], but the preponderance of mss. do not have it, and in as much as their reading is the more difficult and also in keeping with the fact that Isaiah often uses אֲדֹנָי [Adonai] when he wishes to stress the sovereign power of God, that reading is to be preferred." Note that the other seven versions cited here assume the autograph had אֲדֹנָי.

## Verb 1: יָתַן

The first verb is straightforward:

יָתַן (*yitēn*): third person masculine singular Qal imperfect of יָתַן , *to give, to put, to set*<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, the translation would be this:

Therefore the Lord himself will give to you a sign...

E. Henderson gives the significance of the use of the imperfect:

The verb יָתַן being put in the strictly future tense [imperfect], shews that the sign, or miracle, was not one given or wrought at the time, but belonging to some future period.<sup>4</sup>

However, it should be noted, as Henderson goes on to state, that the "future tense" here does not indicate whether the sign will come in the near or distant future.

## Verb 2: הָרָה

הָרָה (*hārāh*) is called a "verb" here simply for convenience. It is perhaps the most difficult of the four because it might be either an adjective or a participle and because the intended time reference, present or future, is also difficult to determine. However, it is perhaps the most important of the four since it has a bearing on the time of the conception. Before reviewing the commentaries, the reference works consulted give the following analyses.

- *BDB* calls it a feminine adjective meaning *pregnant* and cites Isaiah 7:14 as an example; הָרָה is given as the root and pointed as הָרָה , meaning *to conceive, to become pregnant*.<sup>5</sup>
- Ronald Youngblood, *ISBE*, "Immanuel": "The verbal adjective<sup>6</sup> *hārâ*<sup>7</sup> in our text could be either present or future, but to render it as future seems safest in the context."<sup>8</sup>
- Harold Louis Ginsberg, *EncJudaica*, "Immanuel": Ginsberg translates the verse as follows, giving his reason: "...the young woman shall conceive (future as in Judg. 13:5 in light of Judg. 13:3, since otherwise the futurity of the following verb would have had to be indicated by the form *we-yaledah*) and

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3 *BDB*, p. 678.

4 E. Henderson, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 2nd ed. (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1857), p. 62; brackets added.

5 *BDB*, p. 248. The second vowel in the root is lengthened from the usual Pathah to a Qames because the final ה is silent, leaving the second syllable open, which in turn requires a long vowel (see J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 179, 216).

6 "Verbal adjective" is another name for a participle; see the next section dealing with וְיִלְדֵת .

7 *Hārâ* is an alternate transliteration to *hārāh*, in which the final Qames plus the feminine ending *He*, הַ , are represented by the single English letter *â*.

8 Ronald F. Youngblood, "Immanuel," *ISBE*, II:807.

shall bear a son."<sup>9</sup>

- R. Laird Harris, *TWOT*, "הָרָה": "There [in Isa. 7:14] the prophet speaks of a pregnant virgin, using the participle (or adj.) of *hārâ*. The announcement is similar to Gen. 16:11 addressed to Hagar who had conceived and was pregnant. As far as the grammar goes, this could refer to a pregnant virgin either contemporary or in the future, but the reference to virginity shows that the pregnancy is miraculous."<sup>10</sup>
- Christopher North, *IDB*, "Immanuel": "As between the present 'is pregnant' and the future 'shall be pregnant,' the Hebrew can mean either, but the close similarity to Gen. 16:11 is in favor of the first alternative."<sup>11</sup>
- Harry Orlinsky, *IDB SV*, "Virgin": "Once the correct meaning of *עלמה* in Isa. 7:14 is adhered to--and the force of the adjective *הרה* and the participle *ילדת* given their natural due--it becomes clear that what the prophet Isaiah is saying to Ahaz is, 'Behold, the young woman is with child and is about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel!'"<sup>12</sup>

Note that both *BDB* and Orlinsky take *הָרָה* to be a feminine adjective, while Youngblood takes it to be a participle and Harris cites both parts of speech as possibilities. Youngblood and North point out the word could have a present or future sense, but Youngblood favors the latter while North the former. Harris also notes that the time might be present or future but does not indicate his preference. Ginsberg definitely opts for a future time, while Orlinsky prefers the present time. The commentators are similarly divided. Before presenting any arguments for the most likely parsing, it is helpful to examine the next verb.

### Verb 3: וְיִלְדֶת

There seems to be general agreement about this form:

**וְיִלְדֶת** (*we-yōledheth*): feminine singular Qal active participle of **יָלַד**, *to bear, to bring forth, to beget*<sup>13</sup>

A participle, both active and passive, is often called a *verbal adjective* and agrees in number and gender with its noun or pronoun.<sup>14</sup> According to *GKC*, the active participle "indicates a person or thing conceived as being in the continual uninterrupted *exercise* of an activity," and the time element must be determined from the context.<sup>15</sup> Since an active participle describes an "uninterrupted *exercise* of an activity," it is generally translated with an *-ing* as a progressive tense in English.<sup>16</sup>

The participle is called a verbal adjective because it can play a role similar either to a verb or to an adjective.

Using **שׁוֹמֵר** ("guarding") as an example:<sup>17</sup>

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9 Harold Louis Ginsberg, "Immanuel," *EncJudaica*, VIII:1294.

10 This citation is part of a paragraph inserted by R. Laird Harris, the editor of *TWOT*, into this article: Harold G. Stigers, "Hārâ, *TWOT*, I:223; brackets added.

11 Christopher R. North, "Immanuel," *IDB*, II:686.

12 Harry M. Orlinsky, "Virgin," *IDB SV*, p. 940.

13 *BDB*, p. 408; see also *GKC*, §§ 80d, 94f.

14 Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, pp. 66, 85.

15 *GKC*, §§ 116a,d.

16 Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 19.

17 These examples are taken from Greenberg, *Introduction to Hebrew*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965) p. 56.



In both cases the participle יִלְדֶּת describes an "activity" that takes place over a period of time future to Isaiah's prediction of the sign during his meeting with Ahaz. Since the time period of a participle must be determined by its context, and here the context indicates that the "activity" is future to the time of Isaiah's prediction--whether הָרָה is taken in a present or future sense--this context indicates that יִלְדֶּת should be interpreted in a future sense.<sup>18</sup> The resulting two possible translations would be as follows:

(1) Present time for הָרָה : ...the maiden is pregnant and will bear a son...

(2) Future time for הָרָה : ...the maiden will conceive and will bear a son...

It should be noted that if הָרָה is taken as a future sense, the period of time from the point that Isaiah delivers the prophecy to the point of conception is unknown and cannot be determined from this verse.

#### Verb 4: וְקָרְאת

##### Third Person or Second Person?

This word is a finite verb, and the majority view would seem to parse the verb as follows:

וְקָרְאת (*we-qārā'th*): third person feminine singular Qal perfect with waw-consecutive of קָרָא, *to call, to proclaim, to read*<sup>19</sup>

Charles Briggs argues that וְקָרְאת "is pointed as 2 fem"<sup>20</sup> but does not seem to have many followers.<sup>21</sup>

18 John H. Walton, "Isa 7:14: What's In a Name?" *JETS* 30 (September 1987):290, is mistaken on this point. After quoting the *NASB* translation of the participle יִלְדֶּת in a future sense, he makes this general statement: "In reality, however, the Hebrew participle properly rendered conveys action now in progress or about to begin." He references *GKC*, § 116a in support of this generalization. Walton goes on to argue that since the time setting of הָרָה must be determined by the context, he concludes that it should be given a present sense based on the present time of the participle יִלְדֶּת, viz., "the maiden is pregnant," not "the maiden will conceive." However, Walton's generalization about Hebrew participles is too general, and *GKC* made no such statement. Walton is probably referring to *GKC*'s sentence I cited above: "The *participle active* indicates a person or thing conceived as being in the continual uninterrupted *exercise* of an activity." But this statement by *GKC* makes no reference to past, present, or future time. Moreover, in that same paragraph, *GKC* also stated that participles "cannot in themselves be employed to represent definite relations of tense or mood." In § 116d, *GKC* further writes, "The period of time indicated (a) by a participle active, either as an attribute or predicate, must be inferred from the particular context." Participles, then, are not always used in a present sense, and therefore on this basis no conclusion can be drawn concerning the time signature of הָרָה .

19 *BDB*, p. 895, including taking ו as a waw-consecutive, citing Isa. 7:14; also *GKC*, § 74g.

20 Charles Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), pp. 195-96, n. 3.

21 J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapters I-XXXIX* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1896), p. 56, calls this word "an archaic form, easily mistaken for 2nd pers. (so LXX. &c.)." The influence of the *LXX* is discussed in the next few paragraphs.

However, the *LXX* plays a significant role in analyzing this verb because it does use the second person singular. It has καλέσεις, which is parsed as follows:

καλέσεις : second person singular future active indicative of καλέω , to call<sup>22</sup>

The translation would be "you will call his name Immanuel." But the second person in Greek does not distinguish gender as it does in Hebrew. So is the antecedent masculine or feminine?

The role of the Greek translations of Isaiah, however, is somewhat complicated.<sup>23</sup> In pointing וקראת as a third person feminine singular Qal perfect with waw-consecutive, giving "she will call his name Immanuel," the Masoretes were apparently following the Sinaiticus manuscript of the *LXX*, and the Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel. However, the Alexandrinus and Vaticanus manuscripts of the *LXX*, the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Old Latin translation all use the second person singular form καλέσεις, "you will call his name Immanuel."<sup>24</sup> As to the original reading of Isaiah, Youngblood's view is preferred: "it is perhaps better to stay with the MT [Masoretic Text] in light of Gen. 16:11, where the same vocalization is found (without variants)."<sup>25</sup> John Oswalt points out that some medieval Hebrew manuscripts also have the second person reading but nevertheless takes the same view as Youngblood: "...the MT has the harder reading and there is no reason to think it corrupt."<sup>26</sup> Rashi also translates קראת in the third person: "and she will name him."<sup>27</sup> A majority of scholars take the *MT* pointing to be 3fs.

### Past, Present, or Future Sense?

There still remains the problem of the time indicated by קראת. *BDB* does not translate the verb, although the waw is taken to be a waw-consecutive, which would give the perfect verb a future sense based on the decision reached regarding the participle וילדת. *GKC*<sup>28</sup> agrees that the verb is a 3fs perfect and translates it as "she names," English present tense, but nothing is said about the ו.

It would certainly seem that the future best fits the development of the verse. Regardless of whether הרה is taken in a present or future sense, and since the participle ילדת represents a future time in Isaiah 7:14 as

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22 AG, p. 399.

23 Much of this material is taken from Youngblood, "Immanuel," II:807.

24 The Syriac and Vulgate use a passive verb that possibly reflects the unpointed וקרא in the Isaiah scroll 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>, which is taken in the sense of a 3ms Pual perfect (a passive stem) with the waw-consecutive (viz., like this: וקרא), giving "his name will be called Immanuel" (cf. this same pointing in Isa. 62:2, "a new name will be called to you"). According to D. A. Carson (*Matthew*, vol. VIII in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984], VIII:80), the 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> וקרא reading is possibly the Hebrew behind Matthew's citation in 1:23. Matthew uses καλέσουσιν, third person plural future active indicative, resulting in "they will call his name Immanuel," which is generally considered the same as "his name will be called Immanuel."

25 Youngblood, "Immanuel," II:807; brackets added. For more information on the origin and transmission of the *LXX*, see Sven K. Soderlund, "Septuagint," *ISBE*, IV:400-409.

26 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1986), p. 202, n. 2.

27 Noted by Nosson Scherman, *Isaiah*, in *The ArtScroll Series: The Later Prophets with a Commentary Anthologized from the Rabbinic Writings*, gen. ed. Rabbi Nosson Scherman (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2013), p. 63. However, he goes on to note that Radak translates the verb in the second person.

28 *GKC*, § 74g.

concluded in the previous section, the waw on the following Qal perfect verb **וְקָרָאתָ** should be considered a waw-consecutive and the verb translated in a future sense: "she will call his name Immanuel." Further evidence of this conclusion is that babies are generally named at birth, which would be future to the state of pregnancy.

### Who Names Babies?

Strange as it may seem, Calvin argues as follows:

We know that the father is always assigned the right of giving a name to a child; for it is a sign of the power and authority of fathers over children; and the same authority does not belong to women. But here it is conveyed to the mother; and therefore it follows that he is conceived by the mother in such a manner as not to have a father on earth; otherwise the Prophet would pervert the ordinary custom of Scriptures, which ascribes this office to men only.<sup>29</sup>

First, fathers do name many children in the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> However, there are also examples of mothers naming children,<sup>31</sup> "especially if the mother has reason for a unique emotional investment in the child or if the father cannot perform the task."<sup>32</sup> Since the father is the head of the family, though, he can override the name selected by the mother and name the child himself.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in Isaiah 7:14, the fact that the mother named the child cannot imply that there was no earthly father.<sup>34</sup> That would have to be argued on other grounds.<sup>35</sup>

### **Putting the Verse Together**

The key problem to resolve centers on the word **הָרָה** (*hārāh*). There are two issues:

1. Is it a *feminine singular adjective* or a *feminine singular participle (verbal adjective)*?
2. Is it used in a present or future sense?

The opinions given in a number of reference works have been cited above. Among the commentators, here are several examples.

- Rashi: "**is with child**: This is actually the future, as we find concerning Manoah's wife, that the angel

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29 John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 2 vols., trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003; original Latin publication date, 1555), I:248.

30 E.g., Gen. 4:26; 21:3; 38:3; 2 Sam. 12:24; 1 Chron. 7:23; Isa. 8:3; Hosea 1:3-9.

31 E.g., Gen. 4:1, 25; 19:37-38; 29:31-30:13, 14-17; 35:18; Judg. 13:24; 1 Sam 1:20; 4:21; 1 Chron. 4:9; 7:16.

32 Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, p. 212.

33 Gen. 35:18

34 J. A. Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1870), I:172-73; offers a humorous comment on Calvin's citation above: "Calvin, with a strange lapse of memory, alleges that in Scripture mothers never name their children, and that a departure from the constant usage here is a prophetic intimation that the child would have no human father." E. J. Young writes similarly in his journal article, "The Immanuel Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14-16, Second Article," *WTJ* 16 (November 1953):45: "Calvin argues, strangely enough, that in the Scriptures, only fathers could give names to their children. He therefore assumes that the reference to the mother here is because the child 'is conceived by the mother in such a manner as not to have a father on earth.' However, there are instances in the Bible where the mother does, as a matter of fact, name the child." However, in his later commentary, Young notes that Isaiah stresses that the mother will name the child, even though in the 8th century father's normally did this (*The Book of Isaiah*, I:289, n. 38).

35 Whether there was a man involved in this mother's pregnancy is addressed in Chapter 13, subsection "The Implications of the Components of Isaiah 7:14" in the section "Combining the Components for an Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14."

said to her (Judges 13:3): 'And you shall conceive and bear a son...'"<sup>36</sup>

- T. K. Cheyne: "**Is with child**] So we should render, and not 'shall be with child,' in view of the parallel passage, Gen. xvi. 11."<sup>37</sup>
- J. Skinner: "The same phrase in Gen. xvi. 11; Jud. xiii. 5. In the passage before us, the verbs in the original [ הָרָה and יִלְדֵת ] are both participles, and might refer either to the present or the future. But it is doubtful if we can fairly apply one to the present and the other to the future, translating 'is with child and shall bear.' Since the birth is certainly future, it seems natural to take the first verb in a future sense also."<sup>38</sup>
- George Gray: "*Is with child, and shall bear*] this rendering is justified by Gn 16<sup>11</sup> where the same phraseology is used of a woman who has already conceived (cp. vv.4ff.) and is near giving birth. If this is intended here, the promise is that within a few weeks, or days even, God's act of deliverance will be in every one's mouth. The alternative rendering, *shall be with child and bring forth*, would postpone the deliverance for the best part of a year, whereas the narrative seems to suggest that Isaiah expected it at once."<sup>39</sup>
- Franz Delitzsch: "Here...the words are not addressed to the person about to bear the child, although Matthew gives this interpretation to the prophecy; for קָרְאָת is not the second person, but the third, and is synonymous with קָרְאָה (according to Ges. § 74. Anm. 1), another form which is also met with in Gen. xxxiii. 11, Lev. xxv. 21, Deut. xxxi. 29, and Ps. cxviii. 23. Moreover, the condition of pregnancy, which is here designated by the participial adjective הָרָה (cf. 2 Sam. xi. 5), was not an already existing one in this instance, but (as in all probability also in Judg. xiii.5, cf. 4) something future, as well as the act of bearing, since *hinneh* is always used by Isaiah to introduce a future occurrence."<sup>40</sup>
- J. A. Alexander: "As to the form of the expression, it will only be necessary further to remark that הָרָה is not a verb or participle (Vitringa, Rosenmüller), but a feminine adjective, signifying *pregnant*, and here connected with an active participle [ יִלְדֵת ], to denote that the object is described as present to the Prophet's view. *Behold, the virgin, pregnant and bringing forth a son, and she calls his name Immanuel.* The future form adopted by the Septuagint (ἔξει, λήψεται,<sup>41</sup> τέξεται) is retained in the New Testament, because the words are there considered simply as a prophecy; but in order to exhibit the full force which they have in their original connection, the present tense must be restored."<sup>42</sup>

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36 Translation of Rashi's commentary on the Chabad.org Web site.

37 T. K. Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2 vols. (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880), I:48; boldface original.

38 J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapters I-XXXIX*, p. 56; italics original and brackets added.

39 George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah I-XXXIX*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, gen. ed. Charles Augustus Briggs (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 127; italics original.

40 Franz Delitzsch, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2 vols, vol. 7 in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols., C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975; original publication date, 1877), I:216.

41 Alexander here cites the two textual variants: ἔξει in LXX Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus and λήψεται in LXX Vaticanus. Both are third person future active indicatives, the former of ἔχω and the latter of λαμβάνω. ἔχω means *to have* in several different senses. A somewhat literal translation might be, "the maiden in [the] womb will have [a child] and will bear a son," i.e., "the maiden will become pregnant and will bear a son." λαμβάνω means *to take, to receive*, again in several different senses. Here, "the maiden in [the] womb will receive and will bear a son." Again the idea is "will become pregnant" or "will conceive."

42 Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:172; italics original and brackets added.

- E. J. Young: "הרה -- The form is not a part. [participle] which would be *hôrîâh*, but a verbal adj. [adjective] whose m. [masculine] would be *hâreh*. The a vowel of the part. is naturally long; cf. Ar. [Arabic] *qâ-til* and Akk. [Akkadian] *qâ-ti-lum*. On the other hand, the vowel in the penult of *hârâh* is short (tone-long) and is reduced to *Sh<sup>e</sup>wa* in a distant open syllable; cf. Jer. 20:17. In the pl. [plural], however, the a is long. Cf. Amos 1:13 and 2 Kings 8:12. Matt. 1:23 reads 'ἐξ̄ει, which does not prove that the Heb. must be read as a future, but simply that here Matthew found B [Vaticanus] more suitable for his purpose, in that he simply regards the words as a prophecy. וקראת -- Perhaps this orthography is simply due to the analogy of certain *Lamed-He* forms. After the verbal adj. [adjective] the perf. [perfect] with wāw cons. [consecutive] expresses the future."<sup>43</sup>
- John Oswalt: "The time reference of the verbs *hârâ* and *yēledet* is not clear, since the latter is a fem. participle and the former either an anomalous fem. participle or, more likely, a verbal noun. (The normal fem. participle should be *hôrîâ*.)"<sup>44</sup>

The two lists of reference works and commentators are summarized in the following table:

### הרה

Source	Part of Speech	Time Reference
<i>BDB</i>	Adjective	
Ronald Youngblood	Participle	Present or Future
Harold Ginsberg		Future
R. Laird Harris	Adjective or Participle	Present or Future
Christopher North		Present or Future
Harry Orlinsky	Adjective	Present
Rashi		Future
T. K. Cheyne		Present
J. Skinner	Participle	Future
George Gray		Present or Future
Franz Delitzsch	Participial Adjective	Future
J. A. Alexander	Adjective	Present
E. J. Young	Verbal Adjective	Present
John Oswalt	Verbal Noun	Future

<sup>43</sup> Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, I:285-86, n. 33; brackets added.

<sup>44</sup> Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, p. 211, n. 26.

It would seem that the sources I consulted are about evenly divided between taking הָרָה either as an adjective or a participle and taking its time reference either as present or future. Moreover, it is unlikely that scholars will ever reach a consensus on either issue. Nevertheless, I would suggest the following argument.

First, *BDB*, Orlinsky, Alexander, and Young take הָרָה to be an adjective, and that is the view accepted here as a working hypothesis.

Second, as already noted in the discussion of יִלְדָת above, there are three clauses in the second part of Isaiah 7:14:

הָעַלְמָה הָרָה      Clause 1

וְיִלְדָת בֵּן      Clause 2

וְקִרְאָת שְׁמוֹ עֲמֹנוּ אֵל      Clause 3

The first clause has a noun for its subject -- הָעַלְמָה (*the 'almah*). But the predicate has no finite verb. If הָרָה is an adjective, it functions here as a predicate adjective in a verbless clause. Two aspects of sentence structure in Hebrew are important at this point.<sup>45</sup>

Noun-clause: a sentence in which the subject is a noun, a pronoun, or a substantive (a noun equivalent), and the predicate a pronoun, a substantive, an adjective, a participle, an adverb, or a numeral rather than a finite verb.

Verbal-clause: a sentence in which the subject is a noun or a pronoun and the predicate a finite verb.

The first clause in Isaiah 7:14b, then, is clearly a noun-clause regardless of whether הָרָה is taken as an adjective or participle. *GKC* makes the following point about noun-clauses:

The syntactical relation existing between the subject and predicate of a noun-clause is as a rule expressed by simple juxtaposition, without a *copula* of any kind. To what period of time the statement applies must be inferred from the context.<sup>46</sup>

The finite verb נָתַן (*to give*) in Isaiah 7:14a is a Qal imperfect, making it future time: "Therefore Adonai himself will give to you a sign." But this likely means nothing more than that this sign is to be given to Ahaz subsequent to the prophet's prediction of it as he speaks here to Ahaz. However, from the arguments given above, וְיִלְדָת in clause two of 7:14b should be taken in a future sense, and then based on this decision, וְקִרְאָת should also be taken in a future sense.

From these two prior decisions about the context, one could certainly take the adjective הָרָה in a future sense:

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45 This material is based on *GKC*, §§ 140 and 141.

46 *GKC* § 141f; italics original.

"the maiden will become pregnant" or "the maiden will conceive." The three clauses would then read as follows:

Behold the maiden will conceive and she will bear a son and she will call his name Immanuel.

However, there is another way to look at these three clauses. The key to a correct interpretation of הָרָה in Isaiah 7:14 might very well be comparison to Genesis 16:11, as noted by North, Cheyne, and Gray in the citations above.

Isaiah 7:14: הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֶּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל

Genesis 16:11: הִנֵּד הָרָה וְיִלְדֶת בֶּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל

The following points develop the argument.

First, except for the name of the child and the manner in which the mother is addressed, the three clauses are identical in the two sentences. Both הָרָה and וְקָרָאת are identical in both verses. In Genesis 16:11, there is a slight difference in the pointing of the participle וְיִלְדֶת, but the parsing of both וְיִלְדֶת and וְיִלְדֶת is the same so that they are the same word--the feminine singular Qal active participle of יָלַד.<sup>47</sup> Thus, all three key words in both passages are the same.

Second, Hagar was definitely already pregnant when the Angel of the Lord spoke to her in verse 11 (see vv. 1-6). Therefore, the correct time reference for הָרָה in Genesis 16:11 must be the present.<sup>48</sup>

Third, the participle וְיִלְדֶת can be taken in a future sense in Genesis 16:11 based on the same arguments in the previous section on וְיִלְדֶת.<sup>49</sup> Thus וְיִלְדֶת is most likely used in a future sense in both verses, Genesis 16:11 and Isaiah 7:14.

Fourth, the 3fs perfect וְקָרָאת can be taken in a future sense in Genesis 16:11 based on the same arguments in the previous section on וְקָרָאת. Thus וְקָרָאת is also most likely used in a future sense in both verses.

Assessing the significance of these conclusions, the following should be noted:

1. Two virtually identical texts, Genesis 16:11 and Isaiah 7:14, use both וְיִלְדֶת and וְקָרָאת in the same sense--a future sense.
2. The Genesis text must have a present sense for הָרָה.

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47 See BDB, p. 408, and C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols., vol. 1 in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols., C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975; original publication date, 1865), I:220. Henderson, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, p. 64, suggests that the pointing וְיִלְדֶת is a contraction of וְיִלְדֶת אֵת, where he presumably takes אֵת as the mark of the accusative.

48 Keil, *The Pentateuch*, I:220, also takes it this way.

49 Again, Keil, *ibid.*, takes it this way.

3. Therefore, the conclusion seems rather likely that הָרָה in the Isaiah text is also used in the present sense.

It is true, of course, that there is nothing in the Isaiah context that verifies the mother of Immanuel is already pregnant as there is in the context of Genesis 16:11. Nevertheless, the identical statements in the two sentences would be strong evidence that they are saying the same thing--namely, both mothers are already pregnant--and that the two statements should be interpreted the same way. At the very least, Genesis 16:11 shows that nothing stands in the way of taking הָרָה in a present sense when וְיִלְדָת is used a future sense. It seems best to conclude with North:

As between the present 'is pregnant' and the future 'shall be pregnant,' the Hebrew can mean either, but the close similarity to Gen. 16:11 is in favor of the first alternative.<sup>50</sup>

If this analysis is correct,<sup>51</sup> then the translation of Isaiah 7:14 would be as follows:

Therefore Adonai himself will give to you a sign: Behold, a/the maiden is pregnant and she will bear a son and she will call his name Immanuel.

In closing this section, it should be noted that although I suggest the best reading is present time for הָרָה and future time for וְיִלְדָת, the final, overall interpretation of the prophecy does not hinge on this reading. The same interpretation would still stand if both words are taken as futures. Nevertheless, Alexander points out the importance of taking the present-tense view:

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50 North, "Immanuel," II:686.

51 Both Ginsberg and Skinner argue against this view; see the citations given above in the bulleted sections. First, Ginsberg notes that Judges 13:5 uses הָרָה in a future sense, but there is good reason for that: as he himself points out, verses 3-4 indicate that Samson's future mother was not yet pregnant when she is addressed by the Angel of the Lord. Delitzsch also makes this point. Second, he argues that if הָרָה is not taken in a future sense, a future sense could not be attributed to וְיִלְדָת: the participle would have to be replaced by a future form of the verb יָלַד. But as I argued in the section on וְיִלְדָת, the context indicates that וְיִלְדָת should be taken as a future regardless of whether הָרָה is taken as a present or a future. Finally, Ginsberg does not cite Genesis 16:11. In Skinner's comment, he considers it "doubtful" to make הָרָה and וְיִלְדָת represent different time references. He cites both Judges 13:5 and Genesis 16:11, and in the case of Judges 13:5 he is correct. But in Hagar's case she clearly is already pregnant when the announcement is made to her. הָרָה must then be given a present-time meaning. But according to Skinner's criterion, וְיִלְדָת must then be given a present sense as well. Again, based on the arguments I give in discussing this participle above, that is not necessary. Neither is the reverse of giving הָרָה a future sense because וְיִלְדָת has a future sense. It simply seems clear that Genesis 16:11 and Isaiah 7:14 are two scenarios where הָרָה can be used in a present sense and וְיִלְדָת in a future sense. Walton, "Isa 7:14: What's In a Name?" p. 291, n. 8, cites the view of Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), p. 157, that if the woman is already pregnant, the adjective הָרָה would need the definite article. In answer, Walton cites *GKC*, §126i to the effect that the article would be required on the adjective only if it is attributive ("the pregnant woman") but not when used as the predicate. However, *GKC* in §126k does admit there are some exceptions to this rule in the case of determinate adjectives or participles and gives Genesis 2:11 as an example: "it is the compassing." Nevertheless, the general rule surely applies to both Genesis 16:11 and Isaiah 7:14 because הָרָה is hardly a determinate predicate adjective in those clauses.

In order to exhibit the full force which they [the verbs] have in their original connection, the present tense must be restored."<sup>52</sup>

Although he takes all three clauses in a present sense, I agree that there is significance in taking הָרָה in a present sense. It is my working hypothesis in this book.

### Implication of Present Time in Isaiah 7:14

If present time is accepted as the most likely sense of הָרָה, how does this affect Isaiah's overall statement? I would suggest that the implication of present time here in this statement by Isaiah is similar to the *perfectum propheticum*, or prophetic perfect, discussed in Chapter 7, subsection "The Contested Verbs" of section "The Referent of the Titles: Preliminary Issues." According to GKC,

This use of the perfect occurs most frequently in prophetic language (*perfectum propheticum*). The prophet so transports himself in imagination into the future that he describes the future event as if it had been already seen or heard by him.<sup>53</sup>

The prophetic perfect is not used here, but a present sense for הָרָה in Isaiah 7:14 could certainly be an example of similar prophetic language. Using the words of GKC, Isaiah "so transports himself into the future" that in effect he would be saying to Ahaz, "I see a maiden who is pregnant, and she will bear a son..." As Alexander states, the two words, הָרָה and וְיִלְדֵת "denote that the object is described as present to the Prophet's view."<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, since present time is not a *certain* conclusion, both the present and future options for הָרָה are discussed in Chapter 13, section "The Components for an Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14."

In the next chapter attention is given to (1) the use of לָכֵן (translated *therefore*), (2) הִנֵּה (*behold*), (3) אוֹת (*sign*), (4) the definite article on 'almah, and (5) the name עִמָּנוּ אֵל (*Immanuel*).

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52 Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:172; italics original and brackets added.

53 GKC, § 106n.

54 Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, I:172.