Chapter 6: Almah and Parthenos

"Okay, okay" a non-virgin birth proponent might now say, "I can see the issue of a dual fulfillment, but what are you going to do with the Hebrew word *almah* in Isaiah 7:14?" This question may be asked because in their minds the Hebrew text of Scripture uses the word *almah* in reference to a young woman without specific reference to her virginity, in contrast to another Hebrew word *bethulah*, which is a technical term for a sexual virgin. Is this the case? The word *almah*, used in Isaiah 7:14, is defined by SEC as follows:

> H5959 / almah / al-maw' / Feminine of H5958; a lass (as veiled or private): - damsel, maid, virgin

Notice the information given in the definition which states that this word *almah* is the feminine form of H5958 in SEC. This word is defined by SEC as follows:

> H5958 / elem / eh'-lem / From H5956; properly something kept out of sight (compare H5959), that is, a lad: - young man, stripling.

With the definitions provided here (lass, veiled, private, kept out of sight, lad) we can begin to see that the word *almah* (and its masculine form *elem*) should be able to be used in Scripture to refer to a sexual virgin. As a matter of fact, this can be easily proven. Why non-virgin birth proponents have not *diligently* studied the Hebrew word *almah* in all of its uses is beyond me. You would think that they'd do their studies before propagating such a bold claim.

Genesis 24:16, 43
In the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis we find the account of Abraham's servant being commanded to go find a wife for Isaac, Abraham's son. In reading verses 1-15 we see that (1) instructions were given by Abraham, (2) the servant began on the journey to the land of Abraham's relatives, and (3) the servant prayed that the girl who would offer he and his camels water to drink at the well would be the girl meant for Isaac.

In verse 15-16 we find that Bethuel's daughter Rebekah approached the well even before Abraham's servant had finished his prayer. In verse 16 she is described in this manner:

> And the damsel was very fair to look upon, <u>a virgin</u>, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

The word virgin here is the Hebrew word *bethulah*, defined by SEC as "…to separate; a virgin (from her privacy); sometimes (by continuation) a bride; also (fig.) a city or state…" It is this Hebrew word that is heralded by non-virgin birth proponents to be the technical Hebrew term for a sexually pure virgin. Do I agree? I do believe the word *bethulah* can apply to a sexually pure virgin, but what is interesting to note is what *other* word is applied to the girl Rebekah just a few verses later.

> Behold, I [Abraham's servant] stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when <u>the virgin</u> cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink… [Genesis 24:43]

In this passage the word virgin is the Hebrew word *almah*. Now I ask you, was Rebekah a sexually pure virgin? Do you think that the servant would bring Abraham's son a woman who was unchaste? At the same time, do you agree that this sexually pure virgin was referred to both as an *almah* and as a *bethulah*? Your answer will have to be a hearty yes. Thus we see here that the word *almah* is used as a parallel to the word *bethulah*, and that the word *almah* can indeed refer to a sexually pure virgin.

Almah in Scripture
Let's now examine and comment on other uses of the word *almah* in the Hebrew text of Scripture. The emboldened word will be taken from *almah*.

> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the **maid** went and called the child's mother. [Exodus 2:8]

Would you not agree that Moses' older sister Miriam was a sexually pure virgin at this time?

> The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the **damsels** playing with timbrels. [Psalms 68:25]

Nothing can be shown in this place by the context whether or not the damsels were virgins or non-virgins. It could go either way.

> The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a **maid**. [Proverbs 30:19]

I would say that this verse implies a sexually pure virgin by way of the final expression.

> Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the **virgins** love thee. [Song of Solomon 1:3]

This verse would definitely imply a love by non-married, sexually chaste women to the man who is being described in verse two.

> There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and **virgins** without number. [Song of Solomon 6:8]

I can see this usage going either way; virgin or non-virgin.

This concludes the uses of *almah* in the Hebrew text, with the admission of the verse we looked at in the previous chapter, Isaiah 7:14. I personally believe that the immediate fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 was with a woman who *did* have sexual relations to produce a child.[1] However, the dual fulfillment takes place with a sexually pure *almah*, and we have seen that the word *almah* can refer to such a woman.

---

[1] Isaiah 8:1-3

The Septuagint at Isaiah 7:14

Not only can the Hebrew word *almah* refer to a sexually pure virgin, this is also true for the Greek word *parthenos*. "What's the big deal about *parthenos*?" you might ask. This is the Greek word used in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 7:14. The Septuagint text dates its beginning to approximately the 3rd century B.C. and thus is an appropriate text to look at, seeing it will show the thoughts of the translators who penned the Greek words at that time. Proof in point can be found by one author who commented on the use of *parthenos* at Isaiah 7:14 in the Septuagint.

> Not only does Unger's Bible Dictionary reveal how widely used the Septuagint was, but it also points out that it was used by Messianic believers in their arguments with the Jews… since the Messianic believers were so successful in proving Yeshua to be the promised Messiah, their rival Jews found it necessary to put out another Greek translation that would make things more difficult for those who believed and professed faith in Yeshua to win their arguments.

> A primary example of this involves the translation of Isaiah 7:14. In the Septuagint version we read, "Behold, a virgin [parthenos] shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel." The Greek word "parthenos" is the word meaning "virgin," and this is the word that is found in the Septuagint. However, when Messianic believers began using Isaiah 7:14 to prove that Yeshua is the son of the Almighty, born of a virgin, the Jews decided that it was time for a new version, and that is where Aquila comes in. Aquila did not consider Yeshua to be the Messiah, nor did he believe that He was born of a virgin. Therefore, in his version, when he came to the word "parthenos," he simply rendered it neanis, which simply means "young woman." The Greek word "parthenos" clearly refers to a virgin, whereas neanis doesn't necessarily convey the concept of virginity.[2]

This shows us that the word *parthenos* must have had strong connotations of a sexually pure virgin, or else Aquila would not have bothered pulling a "switch-a-roo" in the text. This word is used in such New Testament texts as 1 Corinthians 7:28 where it states in part, "…and if a **virgin** marry…" and 2 Corinthians 11:2 where the assembly is typified as "…a chaste *virgin* to Messiah…" It is also used in reference to the Messiah's mother at Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:27. The *Septuagint* texts which use the word *parthenos* are as follows:[3]

> And if there be a young **damsel** espoused to a man, and a man should have found her in the city and have lain with her… [Deuteronomy 22:23]

> Behold; my daughter a **virgin**, and the man's concubine: I will bring them out, and humble ye them, and do to them that which is good in your eyes; but to this man do not this folly. [Judges 19:24]

> And Amnon was distressed even to sickness, because of Themar his sister; for she was a **virgin**, and it seemed very difficult for Amnon to do anything to her. [II Samuel 13:2]

---

[2] *Facing The Pentecost Controversy*, by Larry and June Acheson, first printing, July 31, 2002, revision, July 23, 2003, p36.

[3] One additional passage, which I've already discussed, uses *parthenos* as well. This is Genesis 24:14,16,43, and 55.

> This is the word which Yahweh has spoken against him; The **virgin** daughter of Sion has made light of thee, and mocked thee; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at thee. [IV Kings 19:21]

> This is the word which [the] Almighty has spoken concerning him; The **virgin** daughter of Sion has despised thee, and mocked thee; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at thee. [Isaiah 37:22]

> Come down, sit on the ground, O **virgin** daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and luxurious. [Isaiah 47:1]

> Will a bride forget her ornaments, or a **virgin** her girdle… [Jeremiah 2:32]

> Therefore thus saith Yahweh; Enquire now among the nations, who has heard such very horrible things as the **virgin** of Israel has done? [Jeremiah 18:13]

> …who shall save and comfort thee o **virgin** daughter of Sion? [Lamentations 2:13]

> The **virgin** of Israel has fallen upon his land; there is none that shall raise her up. [Amos 5:2]

You should now be able to see that the word *parthenos*, much like the Hebrew word *almah*, can refer to a sexually pure virgin.

Conclusion

The claim that the Hebrew word *almah* is not an appropriate word for a true virgin is nothing more than spurious. The word of a surety can mean a woman who has never had sexual relations with a man. Even Martin Luther once made the statement that:

> If a Jew or a Christian can prove to me that in any other passage of Scripture almah means a married woman, I will give him a hundred florins, although God alone knows where I may find them.[4]

How far will the non-virgin birth proponents go in an attempt to prove their sacred doctrine? Is it just too difficult to bow to Yahweh's word and accept the clear teaching of Matthew 1:25?

> And [Joseph] <u>knew her not</u> [kept her a virgin] till she had brought forth her first-born son…

We might also add that just as we saw a singular prophecy have different fulfillment qualities in chapter five with the passages of Psalm 41:7-9 and John 13:16-18, likewise the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled first by a sexual virgin who then knew a man before birthing a son, but the secondary fulfillment is found in a sexual virgin who had not known a man before birthing the Son of Yahweh. I personally believe this is why Yahweh inspired the word *almah* to be used; it can cover both instances beautifully.

---

[4] Taken from the book *The Incomparable Christ*, by J. Oswald Sanders, copyright 1971, Moody Press – Chicago, 1971.