

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

The Brit Hadasha Series - The MEM Mystery

This teaching dives into one of the most widely quoted prophetic passages about the Messiah in the Prophets: Isaiah 9:6–7. Often cited by followers of our Messiah to affirm his identity and mission, these verses contain language that points to divine authority, eternal kingship, and supernatural birth. However, this prophecy has also been the subject of debate. Some Jewish voices claim it refers to Hezekiah, while others, both ancient and modern, recognize it as describing a Messiah that would come in the future.

To understand the full weight and implications of this prophecy, we will explore the grammar of the Hebrew text, particularly the use of prophetic perfect tense, and a peculiar scribal feature known as the “closed *mem*.” We will also consider how rabbinic sources, the *Targumim*, and even the Talmud connect this passage to messianic expectations, and how Matthew’s Gospel reinforces that Isaiah had Yeshua in view.

This teaching will uncover how the prophetic grammar, mysterious letter anomaly, and ancient Jewish interpretation all come together to reveal a powerful message: Isaiah 9:6–7 is not only messianic, but also prophetic of Yeshua’s virgin birth and eternal reign. Here is what this important passage states.

Isaiah 9:6–7

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,

to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD [YHWH] of hosts will do this.

This passage has historically been understood by both Christians and ancient Jewish interpreters as referring to the coming Messiah. Matthew 4:14–16 references earlier verses in Isaiah 9 and directly connects them to Yeshua, confirming the Messianic context.

However, Jewish counter-missionaries claim this prophecy refers to King Hezekiah, asserting that the use of perfect verb forms indicates the events had already occurred in the prophet's time.

Let's explore whether this is a sound conclusion, and what role the mysterious closed *mem* plays in the discussion. What do we mean by the mysterious closed *mem*?

In biblical Hebrew, the letter mem (מ) has two forms: an open form (used in the beginning or middle of a word) and a closed form (used at the end of a word). However, in Isaiah 9:7, the word "*L'marbeh*" ("of the increase") unusually contains a closed mem in the middle of the word, which is grammatically irregular. This anomaly has sparked centuries of rabbinic commentary and is viewed by many as a prophetic sign, hinting at something hidden...possibly even the miraculous virgin birth of the Messiah. We will return to this point in a moment, but first let's address the main grammatical objection to a Messianic interpretation of this passage.

The Real Grammar Issue: Prophetic Perfect and Future Tense

Counter-missionaries argue that the perfect verb forms in Isaiah 9:6–7 prove that the events are in the past, thereby excluding the possibility that this passage could be a prophecy about Yeshua. But this argument is incomplete and misleading.

To understand the counter-missionary argument, we first need to briefly explain a key feature of biblical Hebrew grammar. Hebrew verbs are not primarily organized by tense (past, present, future) like in English. Instead, they are structured around aspect—that is, whether the action is complete (perfect) or incomplete/ongoing (imperfect).

A perfect verb form usually describes an action that is seen as complete, and in many cases this corresponds to a past action in English. For example, the Hebrew perfect form would be used to say "he built," implying that the building is finished. An imperfect verb form, on the other hand, often indicates that an action is still in progress or will occur in the future—something like "he will build" or "he is building."

Counter-missionaries often zero in on the grammar of Isaiah 9:6 to make their case. Specifically, they point out that the verbs in the opening lines—"a child is born" (*yulad*) and "a son is given" (*nitán*)—are written in the perfect form, which in biblical Hebrew typically conveys completed action. Based on this, they argue that Isaiah was not speaking about a future event but describing something that had already taken place. According to this view, the prophet was not predicting the coming of a distant Messiah—such as Jesus, his Hebrew name being Yeshua—but was instead referring to a child already alive in his own time, most commonly identified as King Hezekiah.

This interpretation attempts to confine the prophecy to Isaiah's historical context, effectively removing its relevance to the Messianic expectations fulfilled in the New Testament.

According to this objection, if the verbs are in the perfect aspect (and therefore supposedly past tense), then Isaiah must be speaking of a child who was already present during his time, and not foretelling the birth of the Messiah. This is the grammatical basis on which they attempt to disqualify Yeshua from being the subject of this prophecy.

It is true that Hebrew verbs use “perfect” and “imperfect” aspects, which generally align with past and future actions respectively. But the presence of perfect forms does not mean an event has literally already occurred. Isaiah 9:6 begins with perfect verbs—“a child is born,” “a son is given”—which do read as completed actions.

Yet the passage ends with this:

“The zeal of the LORD [YHWH] of hosts will do this.”

That final phrase is in the imperfect form, expressing future action. The prophecy ends by emphasizing that everything just described will be done by YHWH in the future. This alone undermines the claim that the grammar requires a past-tense-only interpretation. Instead, this mix of past and future forms reveals something deeper: a feature of Hebrew prophecy known as the Prophetic Perfect.

This idiom allows prophets to speak of future events using perfect forms, describing them as if they have already occurred because they are guaranteed to happen. Other clear examples include:

- **Isaiah 5:13** – “My people go into exile...” (yet the exile hadn't happened yet)
- **Amos 5:2** – “Fallen, no more to rise, is the virgin Israel...” (before Israel fell)
- **Jeremiah 23:2** – “You have scattered my flock...” (before the scattering occurred)

These examples confirm that the Prophetic Perfect idiom is a common and accepted prophetic technique.

So far, we have seen that the use of perfect verb forms in Isaiah 9:6 does not rule out a future Messianic fulfillment. In fact, the structure of the passage—especially its conclusion in the imperfect tense—points forward, not backward. But the grammar is not the only indicator. There is something even more unusual embedded in the Hebrew text of this prophecy that has captured the attention of scholars and rabbis for centuries: a mysterious scribal anomaly that may point directly to the miraculous birth of the Messiah.

The Closed *MEM*: A Prophetic Sign of the Virgin Birth

In Isaiah 9:7, the Hebrew word לְמַרְבֵּה (*L'marbeh*, meaning “of the increase”) contains a striking anomaly in some manuscripts of the Masoretic text: a closed *mem*—the final form of the letter מ—appears in the middle of the word, rather than at the end. According to standard Hebrew grammar, a closed or final *mem* (ם) is only supposed to appear at the end of a word, while an open *mem* (מ) is used elsewhere. This irregularity—where we see לְמַרְבֵּה [show correctly on slide] instead of the expected לְמַרְבֵּה [show correctly on slide]—has puzzled and fascinated rabbis and scribes for centuries.

The Talmud (b. Sanhedrin 94a) comments:

“Why is every mem in the middle of a word open, whilst this is closed? The Holy One, blessed be He, **wished to appoint Hezekiah as the Messiah**, and Sennacherib as Gog and Magog; whereupon the Attribute of Justice said before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Sovereign of the Universe! If Thou didst not make David the Messiah, who uttered so many hymns and psalms before Thee, **wilt Thou appoint Hezekiah as such**, who did not hymn Thee in spite of all these miracles which Thou wroughtest for him?' **Therefore it [the mem] was closed.**”

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 94a. Translation adapted from the Soncino edition, available at halakhah.com and Sefaria.org.

This shows the rabbis acknowledged that the closed mem was tied to the Messiah. However, they conclude that Hezekiah could not be the Messiah, despite the initial divine intention, and therefore, the closed *mem* represents a mystery left unresolved.

But there's more. HaBahir, though written in the 12 century and is highly mystical, equates the closed *mem* with a closed womb—a symbol of miraculous birth. The Bahir (84–85) says:

The open Mem. What is the open Mem? It includes both male and female. What is the closed Mem? It is made like a belly from above. But Rabbi Rahumai said that the belly is like the letter Teth. He said it is like a Teth on the inside, while I say that it is like a Mem on the outside. What is a Mem? Do not read Mem, but Mayim (water). Just like water is wet, so is the belly always wet. Why does the open Mem include both male and female, while the closed Mem is male? This teaches us that the Mem is primarily male. The opening was then added to it for the sake of the female. Just like the male cannot give birth, so the closed Mem cannot give birth. And just like the female has an opening with which to give birth, so can the open Mem give birth. The Mem is therefore open and closed.

Sefer HaBahir, sections 84–85. Translation adapted from Aryeh Kaplan's edition.

This passage has been interpreted by some as symbolizing the concept of a closed womb, drawing connections to the closed mem (ם) found unusually in the middle of the word לְמַרְבֶּה (L'marbeh, “of the increase”) in Isaiah 9:7. This anomaly has been seen by some scholars as a hint towards the virgin birth of the Messiah, aligning with the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14.

Combining this with...

Isaiah 7:14

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son

...we begin to see the prophetic picture forming. The closed mem in Isaiah 9:7 is more than a scribal quirk; it hints at the virgin birth of Messiah Yeshua.

Hezekiah, who was not born of a virgin, simply does not fulfill this prophetic sign.

Rabbinic Witnesses Confirm the Messianic View

Contrary to the counter-missionary view, ancient Jewish sources actually support a Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 9:6–7:

- Targum Jonathan explicitly names the Messiah in its paraphrase:

“...his name has been called from of old, Wonderful counselor, Mighty God, he who lives forever, the Messiah...”

In Derekh Eretz Zuta, a minor tractate of the Talmud, we read:

“Rabbi Jose the Galilean says: The name of the Messiah too is ‘Peace’; as it is written: ‘God the mighty, the everlasting Father, the ruler of peace.’”

Hezekiah Was Rejected as Messiah—By the Rabbis Themselves

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 94a) makes it clear that Hezekiah was disqualified from being Messiah because he failed to properly glorify God after Jerusalem was delivered. The heavenly verdict?

So while Hezekiah may have been a candidate, the rabbis agree he was not the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6–7.

Isaiah 9:6–7, this is a clear Messianic prophecy. The mixed grammar—*perfect and imperfect*—marks it as a Prophetic Perfect construction. The closed *mem* points to a miraculous birth, consistent with Isaiah 7:14. Rabbinic writings—including the Targum, Midrash, and Zohar—all support this view. And finally, even the Talmud rules out Hezekiah.

Thus, Isaiah 9:6–7 is rightly understood as a prophecy of Yeshua the Messiah—born of a virgin, given authority, and destined to reign eternally on David’s throne.

For more on this, we would recommend the following teaching:

[The Brit Hadasha Series: The Virgin Birth.](#)

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember continue to test everything.

Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/119Ministries#](https://twitter.com/119Ministries#)