

Isaiah 7:20 – 8:3 + 9:6
Isaiah 9:5-6 + 11:1-9

The Leviticus 12 reading concerned childbirth purity. Leviticus 13 relayed the rules of leprosy.

This haftarah touches on both topics, as well as pointing to the Messiah..

Preceding the beginning of this haftarah is the prophesy of the birth of Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Later in the added verse of the haftarah at the end, Isaiah expands on this child's identity -

- **Isaiah 9:6** - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Mary and Joseph take Jesus the prophesied "child" to the Temple for the childbirth purification ceremony (Luke 2:22-24)

Leprosy

The first verse of the haftarah compares God's chastisement of Israel with leprosy:

Isaiah 7:20 - "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard."

NET - "At that time the sovereign master will use a razor hired from the banks of the Euphrates River, the king of Assyria, to shave the head and the pubic hair; it will also shave off the beard."

See **Leviticus 14:8** - "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair"

Shaving of all the body hair was part of the cleansing of a leper. Israel here is seen as leprous, the chastening by the Assyrians is seen as part of their cleansing process. God would use Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria as his instrument to distress King Ahaz.

Many commentators agree:

"Possibly there may be an allusive reference to Leviticus 14:9. The nation, leprous in its guilt (Isaiah 1:6), needs the treatment which was prescribed for the leper." - *Ellicott's Commentary*

The first haftarah passage ends with a prophesy about Isaiah's own child:

Isaiah 8:3 - "And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz."

Maher-shalal-hash-baz = "swift is (the enemy to) booty, speedy to the prey"

The prophetic name given to this child would serve as a sign that God's prophecy of chastisement on Israel would surely take place.

The Mystery of the Open '*Mem*'

Isaiah 9:7 - "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

The Hebrew letter "m" called *mem* has two forms. One has an opening in the lower left corner.



The other is closed, making sort of an image of an enclosed square.



According to the rules of Hebrew grammar and spelling, a closed *mem* can appear only at the end of a word. A closed *mem* is a final *mem*, and can be used only as the final letter of a word.

But there is one place in the Hebrew Bible, however, where a closed *mem* occurs inside a word.

Isaiah 9:7 - "Of the increase of his government..."

"of the increase" = *l'marbeh* - abundance, increase, plenty

The *mem* is closed. All other places where the same word is used, the *mem* is open.

Rabbis associated the letter *mem* with the word "womb" (*me'em*) (Sefer Yetzira 3:4, Bahir 85, Etz Chaim, Shaar HaYereach 3, p. 176). A closed *mem* is a closed womb; an open *mem* is the womb opening to give birth (Bahir 84).

Isaiah's prophecy tells us that this child will be concealed inside a closed womb, i.e., the womb of the Virgin spoken of in **Isaiah 7:14**.

The rabbis and the Kaballah explain that when it is time for the Redemption, the closed *mem* of Isaiah's *I'marbeh* will open for the coming of the Messiah (Radak, Isa. 9:6).

(See JewishRoots.net - <https://buff.ly/2NwCg48>)

Finally, in an additional haftarah passage, the earlier child is further identified as the Messiah:

Isaiah 11:1-9 - "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

Rashi - Eventually, the King Messiah shall come and redeem them.

(read the whole passage)