

# 2 Nephi 7

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## **2 Nephi 7:1**

<sup>1</sup> Yea, for thus saith the Lord: Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? For thus saith the Lord: Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement? To whom have I put thee away, or to which of my creditors have I sold you? Yea, to whom have I sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

### *Comments*

In 1879, Orson Pratt created a chapter break at this point to match with the way Isaiah is broken into chapters and verses. This makes it easy for modern readers to line up the two accounts. It masks the fact that both this chapter and the next were originally part of the same chapter as our Chapter 6. That isn't a significant change, only that we must be reminded that right after Jacob finishes with Isaiah 49:24–26 he continued with Isaiah 50. Jacob did not intend that the information from this chapter, or the next, should be considered separate from what he had already quoted from Isaiah.

At the beginning of this chapter, we have Yahweh speaking to Israel. It is an Israel that finds itself in trouble. That they are in trouble is not the issue, it is whether or not that trouble might be laid at Yahweh's feet. When Yahweh asks if he has put Israel away or cast it off forever, he is giving notice that it was not he who did so.

Yahweh asks "to whom have I sold you?" The answer is "for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves." Yahweh recognizes Israel's plight, but it is one that they have brought upon themselves. Yahweh may have allowed it but did not cause it.

For the new Nephite community, this is a reminder that the promise of the land is conditional. They may or may not prosper, depending upon their faithfulness to Yahweh. Should they choose not to be faithful, the repercussions would come from the violation of the covenant and not Yahweh's desires for them.

## **2 Nephi 7:2–3**

<sup>2</sup> Wherefore, when I came, there was no man; when I called, yea, there was none to answer. O house of Israel, is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem, or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at

my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make their rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up, and they die because of thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

### *Comments*

The first verse introduced the idea of Israel as a wife. Yahweh had asked if he had given her a bill of divorce. Of course, Yahweh had not left, but He continues the emphasis on Israel's state of separation from God's path. He notes that when he came to Israel, "there was no man." This is a reference to the bill of divorce. Yahweh did not divorce himself from Israel, but he finds Israel without a husband. In Hebrew culture, the lack of a husband placed the woman in dire economic and social circumstances, thus, when Yahweh notes that there is no man, he is underscoring Israel's difficult position.

For Israel, this separation from their protector was evident in the Assyrian invasion. For those to whom Jacob was speaking, it was a reminder of what would happen should they be unrepentant and not return to the conditions required to prosper in the land.

Although the things that affect this new community might be temporarily separating them from God, God stands ready to redeem them. Yahweh is telling them, through Isaiah and through Jacob, the Yahweh has the power to redeem. Yahweh has power over the whole of the world, and his response to their plight is sadness. It is a sadness that is demonstrated when he says that he clothed the heavens with blackness, and with the sackcloth of mourning.

### **2 Nephi 7:4–7**

4 The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season unto thee, O house of Israel. When ye are weary he waketh morning by morning. He waketh mine ear to hear as the learned.

5 The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

6 I gave my back to the smiter, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

7 For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded. Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

### *Comments*

Commentaries on Isaiah label these verses as one of the servant songs in Isaiah. This is not Yahweh speaking anymore, because we see in verse 5 that God, or Yahweh, has opened the ear of the speaker. Thus, this is a change in the speaker.

This speaker is commissioned to speak for Yahweh. He has been given the tongue of the learned, and the commission to speak to Israel. Verse 6 is one that has obvious Messianic implications. Modern Christians can see the fulfillment of prophecy here, but that would not have been an available interpretation to Israel or Jacob's audience.

For the Nephites, this would return to the Jacob's comments about not being ashamed of the gentiles. This servant does not resist the outsiders, even when it is difficult. In Isaiah's dark times, the servant accepts the temporary embarrassment of the smiter, or the one who plucked off the hair, perhaps a reference to an Assyrian practice with their captives.

For Jacob's audience, the verses say that even in difficult circumstances, there is no shame if they know in whom they trust. They may say, with the servant, that they are not ashamed.

## **2 Nephi 7:8–9**

8 And the Lord is near, and he justifieth me. Who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is mine adversary? Let him come near me, and I will smite him with the strength of my mouth.

9 For the Lord God will help me. And all they who shall condemn me, behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, and the moth shall eat them up.

### *Comments*

This is a message of hope. The chapter began with an apparently abandoned Israel, one in trouble and lacking their protector. This servant provides encouragement by reminding Israel that they can return to Yahweh. Yahweh is yet near and will yet uphold Israel.

When he states "who is mine adversary?" it is a rhetorical question. If Israel can stand with their prophets and with Yahweh, they will not have a true adversary, for through Yahweh's power the enemy will be smitten with only a word.

Jacob does not need to elaborate the nature of the evils he sees in his current society, for his audience will know them well. Because they, like Israel of old, have begun to separate themselves from God's commandments; they too are in danger of losing their protector. If, however, they repent, Yahweh continues to promise that he will redeem them and that their enemies shall be destroyed.

## **2 Nephi 7:10–11**

10 Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?

11 Behold all ye that kindle fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks which ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand—ye shall lie down in sorrow.

*Comments:*

The danger of not following Yahweh is that they shall lie down in sorrow. Yahweh declares how this happens. Rather than walking in the light of his commandments, his people walk in darkness. However, this is a special kind of darkness. There are those who attempt their own enlightenment. They do not produce true light, but only sparks, only brief and incomplete light. Yahweh tells those who trust in their own wisdom to walk in that wisdom, but that it will not be sufficient to save.

In the New World, the most probable likening of these verses would be to the intrusion of some of the elements of their previous pagan religion beginning to seep into Yahweh's religion and religious practice. The process of syncretization is when two different systems, in this case religious systems, come in contact and the result is a merging of ideas from both to create new forms. Thus, in the New World, the previous religion would have been seen as the fire that their wise men and women had lit, but which was only sparks of light compared to the gospel.

Isaiah, and now Jacob, warn the children of Israel against these influences of the wisdom, or the world, rather than a faithful reliance upon Yahweh's teachings.