

2 Nephi 7 — Isaiah 50 — The Bill of Divorcement, the Smitten Cheek, the Face Like Flint

Jacob continues his temple sermon by reading Isa. 50 — the Third Servant Song, c. 559–545 BC.

The shortest of the four Servant Songs, and yet the most personal portrait — the figure who gives His back to the smiters, His cheeks to the pluckers, His face not hidden from spitting, and sets His face like flint. The chapter pivots from the Lord's voice (vv. 1–3, cosmic power) to the Servant's voice (vv. 4–11, suffering body) *without transition* — the same speaker. The Lord and the Servant are one Person in two postures.

Ten Insights

- 1. No divorce decree (v. 1).** *Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?* The Lord's challenge is covenant-legal. The exile is real; the divorce is not. The covenant remains uncanceled.
- 2. Self-sold, not abandoned (v. 1).** *For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves.* The captivity is self-inflicted. Abandonment-feeling ≠ abandonment-fact.
- 3. Hand not shortened (v. 2).** The Lord's power to redeem is unchanged. The issue is Israel's non-response, not the Lord's impotence.
- 4. Tongue of the learned (v. 4).** *Lashon limmudim* — the Servant's speech-gift is *received*, daily. *Morning by morning* the Lord opens the ear. The disciple's discipleship begins with ear-opening, not mouth-opening.
- 5. Not rebellious (v. 5).** *I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.* The Servant's obedience is *chosen* under suffering — Heb. 5:8.
- 6. Crucifixion catalog (v. 6).** *Back to the smiters, cheeks to the pluckers, face not hidden from shame and spitting.* Four abuses, all four narrated in the Gospels' Passion accounts. Brass-Plates Crucifixion-prophecy six centuries in advance.
- 7. Face like flint (v. 7).** *Ke-hallamish* — the hardest Iron-Age cutting stone. Luke 9:51 quotes the verse of Christ's Gethsemane-bound march — *steadfastly set his face*.
- 8. Forensic vindication (v. 8).** *He is near that justifieth me. Who will contend with me?* Paul cites in Rom. 8:33 for the doctrine of justification.
- 9. Adversary garment-grade (v. 9).** Opposition is temporary — *shall wax old as a garment*. The covenant is immortal-grade.
- 10. Trust vs. sparks (vv. 10–11).** The disciple in the dark has two choices: trust the Lord and wait (*shaen* — lean), or kindle his own fire and walk in his own sparks. Self-kindled light produces brief light and long sorrow.

Cross-References

Gen. 22 (Abraham's flint-face toward Moriah); Ex. 14 (Lord drying the sea); Deut. 24:1–4 (bill of divorcement law); Job 19:25 (my Redeemer liveth); Ps. 22 (despised one's psalm); Ps. 27:1 (Lord my light); Prov. 3:5 (lean not unto thine own understanding); Isa. 6 (here am I, send me); Isa. 7:14; 8:16 (limmudim); 9:6; 42:1–9 (First Servant Song); 49:1–13 (Second); 51:6, 8 (moth-eaten garment); 52:13–53:12 (Fourth); 54:13 (taught of the Lord); 61:1–2; Jer. 3:8 (Lord's divorce of northern kingdom); Lam. 3; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 26:67 (spitting, buffeting); 27:29 (crown of thorns); Mk. 14:65; Lk. 9:51 (face set — direct quote); 22:63; Jn. 6:45 (Jesus citing Isa. 54:13); 18:22; 19:1 (scourged); Rom. 8:33–34 (Paul citing v. 8); 1 Cor. 1:18; Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 5:8 (learned obedience by suffering); 12:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:21–25 (Christ left example of suffering); 4:13; 1 Ne. 19:9; 19:10 (Neum — crucified); 19:23; 2 Ne. 6; 2 Ne. 9; Mosiah 3:9; 14 (Abinadi quoting Isa. 53); 15; Alma 7:11–13; 3 Ne. 11–18; D&C 6:37; 19:18; 121–122; 138; JS—H 1.

Apocryphal Correlations

Wisdom of Solomon 2:12–20. The righteous one despised — *let us condemn him with a shameful death*. Closest pre-Christian parallel to vv. 4–6.

4 Maccabees 6:1–11. Martyrdom of Eleazar — *I will not deny my noble brotherhood with the law*. Same flint-face-under-torture grammar.

Testament of Levi 4:1. *The rocks shall be rent, the sun darkened... the holy ones filled with grief because of him.* Direct Servant-Song echo applied to Messianic suffering.

2 Esdras 7:28–30. *My son the Messiah shall be revealed... and after these years shall my son Christ die.* Dying-Messiah doctrine — closest 1st-century-AD parallel.

Targum Jonathan on Isaiah 50. Aramaic targum renders v. 4 applied to *the Messianic teacher* — pre-Christian Jewish messianic reading.

Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab). Qumran's Teacher of Righteousness — suffering-but-vindicated covenant figure; closest Qumran analogue.

Odes of Solomon 31. *They condemned me when I stood up, me who had not been condemned... and the Most High delivered me.* Christian-era Servant-Song echo.

1QH (Qumran Hodayot) 11. *Thou hast made my face shine by thy covenant.* Disciple's posture under affliction.

Hebrew Word Studies

sefer krittut (סְפֵר כְּרִיתוּת, "bill of divorcement") — v. 1. Deut. 24:1–4's required document. The Lord never issued one — the covenant is uncanceled.

lashon limmudim (לְשׁוֹן לִמּוּדִים, "tongue of the learned/disciples") — v. 4. Received gift, not innate. *Babbokeir babbokeir* — *morning by morning* the Lord opens the ear.

ke-hallamish (כְּהַלְמִישׁ, "like a flint") — v. 7. The hardest Iron-Age cutting stone. Lk. 9:51 quoted of Christ's Gethsemane march.

yishshaen (יִשְׁשָׁאֵן, "lean upon") — v. 10. The disciple's posture in the dark — passive support, full weight on the Lord. Prov. 3:5.

khlimmah / roq (חִלְמָה / רֹק, "shame / spit") — v. 6. The Hebrew terms for the most public dishonors — both fulfilled at Christ's trial.

marat (מַרְאָה, "pluck") — v. 6. Plucking the beard — deepest insult in Middle Eastern shame-culture. Implicit in the Passion narratives.

Personal Application

Three practices. First, do not confuse abandonment-feeling with abandonment-fact. The Lord never wrote the divorce paper. Show me the document. The disciple's feeling of being cast off is real as feeling; the being cast off is not real as fact. Repentance is not making a new covenant — it is resuming the standing one. Second, open the ear before opening the mouth. Begin every morning the way the Servant did — letting the Lord open the ear first. Scripture reading, prayer listening, attention to the Spirit's promptings. Hear first; speak after. Third, set the face like flint when the calling requires it. The flint-face is not aggression; it is resolve. Firm, not angry. Without flinching, without softening, without bitterness. The Servant gave His back to the smiter without resisting. He set His face like flint without rancor. When the disciple's hardest moment comes — the unpopular stand, the refused compromise, the quiet integrity in family conflict — flint-face is the covenant posture.