

General Comments on Jacob 2

Polygamy, Concubinage, and Whoredoms

The prevailing interpretation of Jacob 2 is to assume the Nephites are practicing polygamy, and Jacob commands them to stop practicing it. However, a careful review of the text shows Jacob never actually accuses them of practicing polygamy or concubinage, but of committing "whoredoms". The prevailing view is the term "whoredoms" is addressing sexual immorality in general, and therefore includes polygamy and concubinage.

Below, the case is argued that "whoredoms" is not a general term for sex immorality, but is in fact a specific term for prostitution. Assuming such, the Nephites were not committing polygamy and concubinage, but were committing prostitution and the solicitation thereof and attempting to justify it after the fact with ancient cases of polygamy and concubinage.

Syntax In order to avoid semantical problems, a review of the various terms is in order. First, the English word "whore". The Random House College Dictionary gives the noun definition as "a woman who engages in promiscuous sexual intercourse for money; prostitute, harlot, strumpet". The term in colloquial English would be "prostitute" or "ho", the latter being a slang derivative of "whore". There is no reference to concubinage or polygamy, either explicit or implicit, in the definition.

The same dictionary defines a "concubine" first as "a woman who cohabits with a man with whom she is not married" and second "(among polygamous peoples) a secondary wife".

And, finally, the same dictionary defines "wife" as "a woman joined in marriage to a man; a woman considered in relation to her husband; spouse".

Thus, when it comes to dictionary definition English, we have three fairly separate classes, with that of "concubine" being the most ambiguous.

As we are considering the text of the Scriptures, which are a translation of an ancient text, we need to review the ancient sources behind the contemporary translations. As Smith translated the BofM from an ancient version of Hebrew represented by Egyptian characters into KJV English, we may safely draw parallels between OT Hebrew terms and their translated English counterparts.

Below are the Hebrew terms which parallel the KJV English terms of interest (all entries from Strong's). When translating to "harlot" or "whoredoms", this is the term in the Hebrew which consistently appears through both the Law and Writings:

02181 zannah {zaw-naw'}

a primitive root [highly-fed and therefore wanton]; TWOT - 563; v

AV - ...harlot 36, go a whoring 19, ...whoredom 15, whore 11, commit fornication 3, whorish 3, harlot + 0802 2, commit 1, continually 1, great 1, whore's + 0802 1; 93

- 1) to commit fornication, be a harlot, play the harlot
- 1a) (Qal)
- 1a1) to be a harlot, act as a harlot, commit fornication
- 1a2) to commit adultery
- 1a3) to be a cult prostitute
- 1a4) to be unfaithful (to God) (fig.)
- 1b) (Pual) to play the harlot
- 1c) (Hiphil)
- 1c1) to cause to commit adultery
- 1c2) to force into prostitution
- 1c3) to commit fornication

There is no implication of concubinage or polygamy. And the contextual usage strongly forwards prostitution whenever applied literally. Naturally, both fornication and adultery is implicated as those consorting with the prostitutes may be either single or married.

In Ezek. 16 & 23, a different term for "whoredom" gets used both literally and figuratively:

08457 taznuwth {taz-nooth'} or taznuth {taz-nooth'} from 02181; TWOT - 563c; n f

AV - whoredom 18, fornication 2; 20

- 1) fornication, harlotry

Again, it is not used in the context of concubinage or polygamy.

Next, the Hebrew for "concubine", which is consistently used throughout the Law and Prophets only in the context of a literal concubine:

06370 piylegesh {pee-leh'-ghesh} or pilegesh {pee-leh'-ghesh} of uncertain derivation; TWOT - 1770; n f

AV - concubine 35, concubine + 0802 1, paramours 1; 37

- 1) concubine, paramour
- 1a) concubine
- 1b) paramour

Note, the term is not related to or derived from the same terms which are related to whoredoms.

Finally, we will review the term for wife/wives in Hebrew for comparison:

0802 'ishshah {ish-shaw'} from 0376 or 0582; TWOT - 137a; n f

AV - wife 425, woman 324, one 10, married 5, female 2, misc 14; 780

- 1) woman, wife, female
- 1a) woman (opposite of man)
- 1b) wife (woman married to a man)
- 1c) female (of animals)
- 1d) each, every (pronoun)

The same Hebrew term is applied to both singular wife and plural wives, and again, it is a different unrelated term to the previous ones.

The result is we have completely different and unrelated Hebrew terms for "wife" and "concubine" and "whoredoms". This should be expected because there were three separate rules of law for the three separate and distinct classes. These three classes are consistently addressed throughout Jacob 2 in quotations by both Jacob and the Lord:

For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. (Jacob quoting the Lord, Who is commenting to Jacob in reaction to current events, cf. 2:27-28)

SUMMARY: one wife...concubines he shall have none...whoredoms are an abomination

they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. (Jacob quoting a command given to Lehi by the Lord, cf. 3:5)

SUMMARY: one wife...concubines they should
have none...should not be whoredoms committed

Smith's translation of Jacob's speech conforms perfectly to the KJV English rhetoric in translating the Hebrew terms. It has three separate groups, just like the OT Hebrew.

Application The distinct nature of these three classes of women is well known among Bible scholars and historians, and is documented clearly in Bible dictionaries, as follows:

The Easton's Bible Dictionary entry on "concubine" states:

in the Bible denotes a female conjugally united to a man, but in a relation inferior to that of a wife. Among the early Jews, from various causes, the difference between a wife and a concubine was less marked than it would be amongst us. The concubine was a wife of secondary rank. There are various laws recorded providing for their protection (Ex. 21:7; Deut. 21:10-14), and setting limits to the relation they sustained to the household to which they belonged (Gen. 21:14; 25:6). They had no authority in the family, nor could they share in the household government.

The immediate cause of concubinage might be gathered from the conjugal histories of Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 16:30). But in process of time the custom of concubinage degenerated, and laws were made to restrain and regulate it (Ex. 21:7-9).

Christianity has restored the sacred institution of marriage to its original character, and concubinage is ranked with the sins of fornication and adultery (Matt. 19:5-9; 1 Cor. 7:2).

The Smith's Bible Dictionary (1870) entry on "harlot":

That this class of persons existed in the earliest states of society is clear from (Gen. 38:15) Rahab, (Josh. 2:1) is said by the Chaldee Paraphr. to have been an innkeeper; but if there were such persons, considering what we know of Canaanitish morals, (Lev. 18:27) we may conclude that they would, if women, have been of this class. The Law forbids (Lev. 19:29) the father's compelling his daughter to sin, but does not mention it as a voluntary mode of life on her part without his complicity. The term 'kedeshah'

("consecrated") points to one description of such persons, and 'nocriyyah' ("foreign woman") to another, of whom this class mostly consisted. The first term refers to the impure worship of the Syrian Astarte (Num. 25:1; cp. Herod. 1:199). The latter class would grow up with growth of great cities and of foreign intercourse, and hardly could enter into the view of the Mosiac institutes. As regards the fashions involved in the practice, similar outward marks seem to have attended its earliest forms to those which we trace in the classical writers, e.g. a distinctive dress and a seat by the wayside (Gen. 38:14; cp. Ezek. 16:16, 25; Bar. 6:43). Public singing in the street occurs also (Isa. 23:16; Ecclus. 9:4). Those who thus published their infamy were of the worst repute, others had houses of resort, and both classes seem to have been known among the Jews (Prov. 7:8-12, 23:28; Ecclus. 9:7-8); the two women, 1 Ki. 3:16, lived as Greek hetaerae sometimes did in a house together. In earlier times the price of a kid is mentioned (Gen. 38), and great wealth doubtless sometimes accrued to them (Ezek. 16:33, 39; Ezek. 23:26). But lust, as distinct from gain, appears to be the inducement in Prov. 7:14-15. The "harlots" are classed with "publicans," as those who lay under the ban of society, in the New Testament. (Matthew 21:32). The children of such persons were held in contempt, and could not exercise privileges nor inherit (John 8:41; Deut. 23:2; Judg. 11:1-2).

Smith's (1870) entry on "concubine" states:

The difference between wife and concubine was less marked among the Hebrews than among us, owing to the absence of moral stigma. The concubines' condition was a definite one, and quite independent of the fact of their being another woman having the rights of wife towards the same man. The difference probably lay in the absence of the right of the *libellus divortii* [i.e., bill of divorce], without which the wife could not be repudiated. With regard to the children of wife and of concubine, there was no such difference as our illegitimacy implies. The latter were a supplementary family to the former; their names occur in the patriarchal genealogies (Gen. 22:24; 1 Chron. 1:22), and their position and provision would depend on the father's will (Gen. 25:6). The state of concubinage is assumed and provided for by the law of Moses. A concubine would generally be either (1) a Hebrew girl

bought of her father; (2) a Gentile captive taken in war; (3) a foreign slave bought; or (4) a Canaanitish woman, bond or free. The rights of the first two were protected by the law (Exod. 21:7; 21:10-14), but the third was unrecognized and the fourth prohibited. Free Hebrew women also might become concubines. So Gideon's concubine appears to have been of a family of rank and influence in Shechem, and such was probably the state of the Levite's concubine (Judg. 20). The ravages of war among the male sex, or the impoverishment of families, might often induce this condition. The first case was not a hard lot (Exod. 21). The provisions relating to the second are merciful and considerate to a rare degree, but overlaid by Rabbis with distorting comments. In the books of Samuel and Kings the concubines mentioned belong to the king, and their condition and number cease to be a guide to the general practice. A new king stepped into the rights of his predecessor, and by Solomon's time the custom had approximated that of a Persian harem (2 Sam. 12:8, 16:21; 1 Ki. 2:22). To seize on royal concubines for his use was thus a usurpers first act. Such was probably the intent of Abner's act (2 Sam. 3:7), and similarly the request on behalf of Adonijah was construed (1 Ki. 2:21-24).

Smith's (1870) entry on "marriage" states:

... In the post-diluvial age, the usages of marriage were marked with the simplicity that characterizes a patriarchal state of society. The rule of monogamy was re-established by the example of Noah and his sons (Gen. 7:13). The early patriarchs selected their wives from their own family (Gen. 11:29, 29:4, 28:2), and the necessity for doing this on religious grounds superceded the prohibitions that afterwards held good against such marriages on the score of kindred (Gen. 20:12; Exod. 6:20; cp. Lev. 18:9, 12). Polygamy prevailed (Gen. 16:4, 25:1, 6, 28:9, 29:23, 28, 1 Chr. 7:14), but to a great extent divested of the degradations which in modern time attached to that practice. In judging of it we must take into regard the following considerations: (1) that the principle of monogamy was retained, even if the practice of polygamy, by the distinction made between the chief or original wife and the secondary wives. (2) that the motive which led to polygamy was that absorbing desire of progeny which is prevalent throughout Eastern

countries, and was especially powerful among the Hebrews; and (3) that the power of a parent over his child, and of a master over his slave, was paramount even in matters of marriage, and led in many cases to phases of polygamy that are otherwise quite unintelligible, as, for instance, to the cases where it was adopted by the husband at the request of his wife, under the idea that children born to a slave were in the eyes of the law the children of the mistress (Gen. 16:3, 30:4, 9), or, again, to cases where it was adopted at the instance of the father (Gen. 29:23, 28; Exod. 21:9-10)....

Thus, the three separate classes of women are attested to in both syntax of the language involved and in historical application as well.

Usage The next logical step is to review how Jacob makes use of the three term in his speech. The accusation consistently leveled at the Nephites is that of "whoredoms" (cf. 2:23, 33). The Nephites are never accused of having more than one wife or concubines.

The subject of more than one wife and concubines is always in the context of the Nephite's attempt to justify their whoredoms and the prohibition of all such activities by the Lord (cf. 1:15, 2:23).

What is happening in the text is Jacob is attacking the Nephite's attempt to use the example of David's and Solomon's wives and concubines to excuse their own prostitution.

This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.
(2:23)

Jacob never equates the two cases firmly. Rather, he compares them saying "somewhat" and "such as like unto".

And now it came to pass that the people of Nephi... began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son. (1:15)

He clearly doesn't consider the cases all that similar in the first place and isn't compelled by the Nephite attempt to justify

themselves in these "whoredoms" using the case of David and Solomon which involve "many wives and concubines". (As an aside, this obviously casts doubt on the implication by equation of polygamy and concubinage between the Nephites and David and Solomon. If Jacob doesn't even see the cases as clear parallels then there must be substantive differences between them.)

Jacob attacks their rationalization by pointing out to them even polygamy and concubines are forbidden, so that cannot be used to justify prostitution:

Behold, the Lamanites your brethren...are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our father--that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. (3:5)

The Nephites are committing "whoredoms" and are seeking to excuse themselves in the examples of David and Solomon. But, in doing so, they are ignoring the fact that what David and Solomon did is in fact prohibited regardless.

Context of Terms As it is plain the accusation leveled at the Nephites is "whoredoms", the final topic to address is that of context. As noted in the Strong's reference for the Hebrew equivalent terms for "whoredoms" there are figurative uses of this term. Could Jacob be using this term figuratively?

First, we must review the usage of the terms in question in a blatantly figurative context. In these cases the authors are the various OT Prophets, such as Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. "Whoredoms", when used figuratively, represents being unfaithful to the Lord. It is presented as the men of Israel "whoring" with idols. The symbolism is derived from the Canaanite practice of fertility worship wherein one would literally consort with cult prostitutes in an attempt to increase the fertility of one's fields or flocks. Thus, even the figurative usage of "whoredoms" has a firm rooting in the literal act of prostitution, it is just pushed into a religious context because the Israelites are abandoning worship of the Lord so they may consort with cult prostitutes.

There is nothing in the present text of Jacob suggesting idolatry or cult prostitution. Jacob is speaking very literally and employs none of the imagery or rhetoric which the various OT prophets use when invoking the figurative context of "whoredoms". And, even if he were, that would still not include polygamy or concubinage into the definition of "whoredoms", as there is no suggestion of those practices being addressed in any of the OT Prophets when they employ the figurative uses. Polygamy, and to

some degree concubinage, were legal and sanctioned practices at that time, how then could it be condemned in the figurative usage of the time?

Could it be possible that Jacob is using the term "whoredoms" in some other figurative manner, one that is novel? For example, the vernacular English usage of "whore" is used to refer to prostitutes in specific as well as fornicating and adulterous women as well, and even colloquially to men. Why then couldn't Jacob be doing the same?

First, the presence of a figurative usage for a term in contemporary English doesn't grant license to apply any possible figurative usage at will, particularly when history argues against it. When the figurative uses of a term are well defined within the historical context, then one automatically begs the issue by creating some new one.

Second, in this case in specific, when Jacob is generally making reference to clear cases of general sex immorality, he doesn't use the term "whoredoms", instead he uses the term "abominations" as in:

For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. (2:31)

or "lasciviousness" as in:

And now I, Jacob, spake many more things unto the people of Nephi, warning them against fornication and lasciviousness, and every kind of sin, telling them the awful consequences of them. (3:12)

No reference to "whoredoms" here. He is obviously making a blanket statement about sex immorality in general. If "whoredoms" is being used in a novel way to blanket reference polygamy and concubinage and everything else, why does he use completely different terms in these two cases where it is plain from the context he is making blanket statements? (As an aside, the term "lasciviousness" is the real novelty here. It never appears in the KJV OT, only the NT. The closest Hebrew counterpart is 'avah which is translated to "desire, lust, covet", cf. Num. 11:34, Deut. 5:21, Deut. 14:26. If Jacob were looking for an ambiguous blanket term this is the one he would have employed rather than "whoredom".)

Conclusions When Jacob speaks generally about sex immorality, he

doesn't use the term "whoredoms", he uses other terms instead. Jacob's own usage of the term is "whoredoms" unequivocal. The context and usage of the term is one that strictly conforms to Hebrew usage and therefore does not lend itself to a colloquial or vernacular English reading. There is nothing in the text to suggest a figurative or novel usage. The conclusion must therefore be that the Nephites were engaging in prostitution and not polygamy or concubinage. There is no substantive or credible evidence supporting any other reading.

Some suggest the fact that polygamy and concubinage is prohibited in the text necessarily implies they were committing it. This is not the case, any more than all of the prohibitions in Jacob's previous speech in 2 Ne. 6-10 necessarily implies they were committing all of those sins he was preaching against.

And finally, in ch. 11 we have king Noah and his priests engaging in polygamy, concubinage, (cf. 11:4) and whoredoms (cf. 11:2). And in this case it is made plain they were guilty of all three acts and that "whoredoms" meant consorting with "harlots" (cf. 11:14). Thus, the BofM terminology remains consistent with the Hebrew usages noted above in a contemporaneous text that is not ambiguously worded, arguing against any novel usage of the term "whoredoms".

Comments on Jacob 2

1 THE words which Jacob, the brother of Nephi, spake unto the people of Nephi, after the death of Nephi: 2 Now, my beloved brethren, I, Jacob, according to the responsibility which I am under to God, to magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple this day that I might declare unto you the word of God. 3 And ye yourselves know that I have hitherto been diligent in the office of my calling;

but I this day am weighed down with much more desire and anxiety for the welfare of your souls than I have hitherto been. 4 For behold, as yet, ye have been obedient unto the word of the Lord, which I have given unto you. 5 But behold, hearken ye unto me, and know that by the help of the all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth I can tell you concerning your thoughts, how that ye are beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very abominable unto me, yea, and abominable unto God. 6 Yea, it grieveth my soul and causeth me to shrink with shame before the presence of my Maker, that I must testify unto you concerning the wickedness of your hearts.

7 And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God; 8 And it supposeth me that they have come up hither to hear the pleasing

word of God, yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul. 9 Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes, to enlarge the wounds of those who are already wounded, instead of consoling and healing their wounds; and those who have not been wounded, instead of feasting upon the pleasing word of God have daggers placed to pierce their souls and wound their delicate minds.

10 But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God. 11 Wherefore, I must tell you the truth according to the plainness of the word of God. For behold, as I inquired of the Lord, thus came the word unto me, saying: Jacob, get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people.

v1 Probably a brief colophon, but it might be an indication someone else inscribed Jacob's talk. Given Jacob's complaint about the difficulty of inscribing in 4:1 and the use of the plural "we", the latter case is possible.

v2-11 Jacob begins his address to the people by stating it is an unpleasant task (v. 6) which the Lord has commanded him to do (v. 5, 9-12), but he has to do it or their sins would be on him because of his calling (v. 2-4). He also apologizes the innocent who will be hurt by what he must say (v. 7) when they have come up to hear the word of God which heals (v. 8).

Note the considerable emphasis Jacob puts on his calling (v. 1-3) and the responsibility that goes with it (v. 6, 10) when it comes to calling them to repentance. Jacob is not happy about having to chastize the men in this manner, but the Lord commanded him to do it (v. 10-11), and so he must do it. Jacob is letting the people know he doesn't like calling them to repentance, but it is in fact the Lord who is calling them to repent and not himself.

12 And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully. 13 And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

14 And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth

you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you. 15 O that he would show you that he can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust! 16 O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!

17 Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. 18 But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. 19 And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good--to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted.

20 And now, my brethren, I have spoken unto you concerning pride; and those of you which have afflicted your neighbor, and persecuted him because ye were proud in your hearts, of the things which God hath given you, what say ye of it? 21 Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other. And all flesh is of the dust; and for the selfsame end hath he created them, that they should keep his commandments and glorify him forever.

22 And now I make an end of speaking unto you concerning this pride. And were it not that I must speak unto you concerning a grosser crime, my heart would rejoice exceedingly because of you.

v12-22 Jacob addresses the first topic of materialism, which is leading to class distinction. He states plainly there are those among them who have been spoiled by the great prosperity they are enjoying, such that their priority has become obtaining precious metals and fine clothing and so on, and they have become prideful and arrogant in their apparent wealth (v. 12-13).

Jacob rhetorically asks them if they think God would justify them in behaving in such a manner, and then answers saying God condemns such things (v. 14). Jacob wishes God could reveal to them how small and insignificant they really are (v. 15), in contrast to where their pride has lifted them up to. Jacob wishes He would do this so that He would rid the Nephites of this pride, and they would keep His commandments so their pride wouldn't corrupt their souls (v. 16).

Jacob exhorts them to stop being selfish with their material things so all may be rich (v. 17). He admonishes them to seek for the kingdom of God first, and then for material things (v. 18). If they do this, then the material things will be used for furthering of God's purposes (v. 19) and not for the indulgence of the individual.

Jacob then reemphasizes that they have no reason to be proud as the things which they are taking pride in are gifts from God (v. 20). God has created all men, so they are all of value to Him. They were created to be obedient to His commands (v. 21), so the real issue of whether men are great or not is not how much additional dust they accumulate, but whether they keep His commands.

Jacob concludes this portion of the sermon by saying things wouldn't be so bad if this were God's only grievance against them (v. 22).

This section of text generally follows an A-B-A-B pattern, as follows:

- A - (v. 12-13) Disparity in wealth causes persecution
- B - (v. 14-16) Unjustified in pride, they are dust
- A - (v. 17-19) Use wealth to help each other instead
- B - (v. 20-21) Unjustified in pride, they are dust

v13 "persecute your brethren because ye suppose ye are better than they", from what Jacob says of the Nephite hatred of the Lamanites in 3:3-9 one might assume the "brethren" here are the Lamanites. However, this seems unlikely given the general context of division and hostilities between the two groups. How could the Nephites persecute the Lamanites if the two groups were largely separate? Thus, it is more likely the persecution and division is within the Nephite community.

v18-19 Wealth is not intrinsically evil. If used properly, it can accomplish great good. The issue is how one feels about wealth and material things, and what they do with them whether they have a lot or a little. 1 Timothy 6:10 states:

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

It is not the money that is the root of evil, but the love of money. If a person's priorities are in the right place, they will put the kingdom of God first and will use the wealth they have to further the kingdom by helping those in need.

v19 In the latter half of the verse Jacob appears to be paraphrasing Isa. 58:6-7.

23 But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to

excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son. 24 Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. 25 Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. 26 Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old.

27 Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; 28 For I, the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. 29 Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes. 30 For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.

31 For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. 32 And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts. 33 For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts.

34 And now behold, my brethren, ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi; wherefore, ye have known them before; and ye have come unto great condemnation; for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done. 35 Behold, ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. And because of the strictness of the word of God, which cometh down against you, many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds.

v23-35 Jacob now turns his attention to an even more serious sin, that of sexual immorality. There are people among them who are trying to falsely justify prostitution using the example of David and Solomon (v. 23). Jacob states David and Solomon did have many wives and concubines, and it was abominable to the Lord (v. 24). The Lord led these people out of Jerusalem because of the wickedness of her inhabitants so that a righteous branch of Joseph might be raised up away from their corrupting influence

(v. 25), so the Lord doesn't want this group going back and repeating the past sins of Jerusalem (v. 26).

Thus, Jacob commands the Nephites they shall only have one wife and no concubines (v. 27), because the Lord is pleased with chastity and disgusted with prostitution (v. 28). If they don't keep this commandment the land will be cursed because of them (v. 29). If the Lord wants them to have more than one wife, then He will command them to do so, otherwise they will only have one wife (v. 30).

The Lord has seen misery and heard the crying of the women in Jerusalem because of the sexual immorality of the men, and not just there but all of the lands of Israel (v. 31). And the Lord will not tolerate the same thing happening among this people, whom He has deliberately led out of Jerusalem to avoid such things (v. 32). He will not permit them to lead the women into prostitution without turning it against the men and destroying them for it (v. 33).

Jacob indicates the people are very well aware the Lord commanded Lehi concerning these things, and so they are under condemnation (v. 34) despite their false attempt to justify themselves. As a result of doing these things they have broken the hearts of their wives and set a terrible example for their children (v. 35).

v30 "these things", an ambiguous phrase taken alone. If we rhetorically connect the "hearken unto" with the command to "hearken" in v. 27 we may safely conclude the "these things" refers to the contents of v. 27-30.

v31 Compare Hosea 4:14.

v32 "the daughters of this people", this suggests those women who had been involved in the prostitution were Nephite women, not Lamanite women. The Lord is speaking to the Nephites, so they are "this people". Furthermore, in 3:5-7 Jacob characterizes the Lamanites as being monogamous and free from whoredoms, so the women cannot be Lamanites.

v33 Compare Moroni 9:9-15.

v35 "ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites", Jacob uses the comparison with the Lamanites as a means of addressing a new subject, that of their bigotry towards the Lamanites.

"many hearts died", cp. 3:10.

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