This chapter is much longer than previous ones. It isn’t that there is so much more material, but that I decided this time to cover the whole assignment rather than only part of it. We often stop reading the Book of Mormon when we get to Isaiah, and I want to see how Isaiah’s teachings are connected to the events of the Book of Mormon as well as its teachings.

Consider the context in which Jacob’s sermon occurs. The people to whom he is speaking left Jerusalem to wander in the wilderness, cross the ocean, and end up in a new land. Now they have just left those who came with them and, as it were, gone into the wilderness again. Why does Jacob think he needs to warn them at this particular time?

2 Nephi 6

Verse 2: What is the difference between being ordained and being consecrated? (Or is there a difference?)

Why does Jacob remind them that he was consecrated by Nephi when he tells them of his priesthood calling?

Was Nephi their king or not? Second Nephi 5:18 says that Nephi didn’t want to be their king but indicates that he might have been anyway—though verse 19 suggests that
he was something other than a king. If Nephi wasn’t their king, why does Jacob speak of Nephi in this way?

How could the Nephites depend on one person, Nephi, for safety? What does it mean to say that he was their protector?

**Verses 4–5:** Jacob says he is going to read them the words of Isaiah, for they are meant for the house of Israel. What are the different senses of the phrase “house of Israel”? In what ways do they apply to each of the meanings of the phrase? In what ways might these words apply to us? In what ways do they apply to a narrower sense of “the house of Israel”?

Jacob tells us (verse 4) that he will read from Isaiah because Nephi asked him to. Why do you think Nephi picked these sections of Isaiah?

**Verses 6–7:** Jacob begins quoting Isaiah at Isaiah 49:22. The theme of Isaiah 49 is the redemption of Israel from captivity, and we understand the chapters from which Jacob reads (Isaiah 49–52) to be prophecies of the Messiah. Why does Jacob begin where he does rather than earlier?

When the Lord says he will lift up his hand to the Gentiles (verse 6), what does he mean? What do you think is the significance of lifting up the hand?

What does “set up my standard” mean? As it is used here, a standard is a flag. Of what might it be a symbol here? What does the Lord mean when he says he will set up his standard to the people?

What service is it that the Gentiles will perform for Israel (verse 7)? What is the Lord promising the house of Israel?
Verses 8–18: Compare what is in these verses to verses 6–7. Those verses say that the Lord will lift up his hand to the Gentiles and will set up a standard to them. They also say that the Gentiles will serve the house of Israel and will bow down to them in subservience, and they say that Israel will know that he is the Lord and won’t be ashamed of him. These verses say that Israel has been scattered but will be gathered and scattered again when Christ is killed, and that Israel will be persecuted but allowed to continue until it comes to know Christ, when it will be restored to its inheritance. These verses also say that the Gentiles who believe will be blessed. The passage also tells of the Second Coming. How do these verses explain verses 6–7?

Verses 16–18: Jacob resumes his quoting of Isaiah again, taking up where he left off. (See Isaiah 49:24ff.) Notice that Jacob shifts back into quoting Isaiah without saying anything about the fact that he is doing so. Why not? Does that tell us anything about the office of a prophet?

The usual answer to the question of verse 16 would be no, but in reference to the children of God, as verse 17 shows, the answer is yes. What is the point of verses 16–17?

What might the image of feeding on one’s own flesh mean (verse 18)? It has an obvious literal meaning, but is there any other meaning as well?

2 Nephi 7

Verse 1: The Lord addresses Israel as if it were a child: Have I cast you off, or divorced your mother, or sold you? Fathers in dire circumstances have sometimes had to sell their chil-
dren to satisfy their creditors (see 2 Kings 4:1 and Nehemiah 5:5), but the Lord has no such creditors. Though Israel has been separated from the Father, the separation isn’t permanent. It is a consequence of their unrighteousness.

**Verse 2:** To whom is the Lord speaking in this verse and the next?

To what time is the Lord referring when he says, “When I came, there was no man”?

Who was absent? Who didn’t hear him?

After the Lord speaks to them of his power to redeem and deliver, what might Israel think of when he mentions his power to dry up the sea?

**Verses 4–9:** There are two interpretations of these verses. According to one, the Lord is speaking; according to the other, Isaiah is speaking. What do we learn from each interpretation?

**Verses 10–11:** These two verses compare those who trust God (verse 10) and those who do not (verse 11). What does it mean to say that those who trust in God walk in darkness? What does it mean that those who will have sorrow surround themselves with sparks and walk in the light? Usually the righteous are portrayed as walking in light and the unrighteous are portrayed as walking in darkness. Why is that imagery reversed here? What is the origin of the light in verse 11?
2 Nephi 8

Verses 1–25: How would this speech, a speech of consolation to Israel, be an appropriate thing for Jacob to repeat to the Nephites at the time of Nephi? Later? To us?

Verse 1: What does it mean that the righteous should look to the pit (or quarry) from which they were cut?

Verses 2–3: Does this passage explain the pit and the hole of verse 1? How?

How would one “look unto Abraham . . . and unto Sarah”? What is the Lord commanding here?

Isaiah mentions that Abraham was called “alone”—in other words, when he was the only one in Israel—and that he was blessed. Presumably the blessing referred to is that of numerous posterity. How is it relevant that he was alone?

In verse 3 the comparison is to verse 2: just as Abraham and Sarah were blessed when she was barren and supposedly beyond hope, so will Israel be blessed and made fruitful. Why the reference to Eden? What does it mean that the new Eden will be filled with gladness, thanksgiving, and song? What is the comparison?

Verses 4–6: These verses may help us understand 7:10–11 better: The Lord will give light to the earth by giving divine guidance, instruction, and salvation rather than what is offered by the world. How do we distinguish between the two sources of light?

Verse 7: In Isaiah the word law could also be translated “instruction.” Presumably the same is true of whatever
Nephite word Jacob used in quoting Isaiah. What does that say about the law?

What does it teach? What does it mean to say that the righteous have the law/instruction written in their hearts?

Why do those who are righteous need not fear the reproach of others?

**Verse 9–11:** Who is calling out “Awake!” (verse 9)? Who is being addressed? Do verses 10–11 explain the references in verse 9?

Notice how scripture refers to the type of Israel—leaving Egypt, entering into the promised land. How is that type relevant to Lehi’s family? How might Jacob and Nephi have understood these verses to apply to them? To the Nephites in particular? To us?

**Verses 12–16:** If verses 9–11 are Israel’s prayer for deliverance, these verses are the answer to the prayer. How are that prayer and this answer relevant to the Nephites? To us?

The word translated “comfort” in Isaiah (verse 12) originally meant “strengthen” as well as “soothe.” Does that change your understanding of the verse?

Why is it important in this context to remind Israel that the Lord is the Creator (verse 13)? Verse 13 describes the man at the end of verse 12 “who shall die” and “who shall be made like unto grass.”

What is the contrast between the pit mentioned in verse 14 and that of verse 1?
In verse 15 we see that the Lord has power over all nature. How does this compare to the power feared by those who have forgotten him?

In whose mouth have the words of verse 16 been put? Israel’s? Isaiah’s? What does it mean to be covered in the shadow of God’s hand?

**Verses 17–25:** These verses describe the end of Israel’s captivity and their reentry into the promised land. What historical event or events might this describe? The original return from Babylon? The gathering at the Second Coming? The entry of the latter-day church into the Salt Lake Valley? Some incident in Nephite history?

In verse 17, what does the cup of the Lord’s fury or anger stand for?

What does it mean to say that Israel has no sons to guide her (verse 18)? Notice that in verse 19 the only two sons remaining are desolation and destruction. What does that mean?

In verse 20, the “head” of the streets means the street corners. Does *rebuke* help us understand the meaning of *fury* in the previous clause?

In verses 21–23 we see that the oppressors will become the oppressed. Who are the oppressors? Who will oppress them? How?

If those the Lord is addressing are drunk with something other than wine (verse 21), what is it? (See verse 22 for some hints.)
Notice that the first part of verse 24 is a repetition of the first part of verse 9. Who was speaking in verse 9? Who is speaking in verse 24? The prophet? The Lord? Israel? Who are the uncircumcised and unclean?

In verse 25, what dust is Israel to shake off of itself? Does referring back to verse 23 give you any ideas? What would shaking the dust off be a symbol of? Does this reference help us understand references such as D&C 24:15; 60:15; and 75:20 (as well as Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5; Acts 13:51)?

Has Jacob used the chapters from Isaiah the way we might expect him to use them? We take them to be prophecies of Christ’s coming. How does he use them?

2 Nephi 9

Jacob gives us chapter 9 as a commentary on Isaiah 49:22–50:11. But 2 Nephi 9 is a chapter on the Atonement. How is this discussion of the Atonement a commentary on that part of Isaiah?

**Verses 1–3:** Why has Jacob read this passage from Isaiah to the Nephites? How will it help them to know that Israel will be restored in the last days? How could they apply this passage to themselves? How can we apply it to ourselves?

**Verse 4ff.:** How is a discussion of the Atonement an explanation of the passage from Isaiah? How are the two related? How does the prophecy of Isaiah typify the Atonement? (Such things as bondage and redemption from bondage occur in both discussions. Thinking about how those are
alike can help us understand the Atonement better, and thinking about the Atonement can help us understand Isaiah better.)

Verses 8–9: What would happen to us if there were no resurrection? Since there is a resurrection, what do we learn from verse 9? Does that teach us anything about the traditional Christian understanding of hell, where those not saved are punished by being eternally in the presence of Satan?

Verse 9: What are “secret combinations”? Webster’s 1828 dictionary says that a combination is an intimate union of several persons that has the purpose of bringing something about together. The Oxford English Dictionary says that when the word has that meaning, it is usually used in a pejorative way. Does secrecy make a combination bad? If so, why? If not, why is it the modifier used here? How are secret combinations antithetical to the gospel? (2 Nephi 26:22–28 discusses this.)

What kinds of things might count as secret combinations today—beyond the things that we sometimes hear mentioned in very conservative political discussions? Given the definition I cited, can we be part of a secret combination without knowing that we are? How do we avoid such combinations? How did the Book of Mormon people avoid them, when they did?

Verse 10: When Jacob mentions “death and hell,” he seems to mean two things. This doesn’t seem to me to be a repetition for emphasis. What does he mean by death? What does he mean by hell? What does he mean by “death of
“the body”? By “death of the spirit”? How are these pairs of terms related to each other?

**Verse 13**: What is the paradise Jacob is talking about? What do we usually call it?

**Verse 14**: What kind of symbolism do you see in the contrast between guilt, uncleanness, and nakedness on the one hand and enjoyment and the clothing of purity and the robe of righteousness on the other hand?

Does reference back to 2 Nephi 4:33 add any meaning to this verse?

Why does Jacob identify himself with the wicked at the beginning of the verse (“we shall have a perfect knowledge of our guilt”)?

**Verse 18**: What are the crosses of the world? Who are those who have endured those crosses? Does this verse and those that follow have any connection to the passage from Isaiah that Jacob read?

Why is the cross an important symbol in the Book of Mormon?

**Verses 21–22**: Does this prophecy help us understand better the promises made to Israel by Isaiah?

What does *hearken* mean? How do we hearken to the voice of the Lord? Is it possible to have faith but not to hearken or to hearken but not to have faith?

**Verse 24**: What reason does this verse give for the damnation of those who refuse to repent? Why is that the appro-
Appropriate explanation for this discussion? In fact, what are we to make of an explanation like that?

**Verses 25–26:** We sometimes speak as if the Atonement is required because there is a law that God must obey. Does Jacob speak that way? What does he say? Who has given the law? Whose justice is it that must be satisfied?

**Verses 28–33:** What part of Isaiah’s prophecy do these verses refer to and amplify?

**Verses 28–29:** What kind of “wisdom” does Jacob warn against? What makes that supposed wisdom foolishness?

**Verse 30:** What does it mean to be “rich as to the things of the world”? Why does Jacob warn the rich? Does he warn all of those who are rich or only some? How much does one have to have to be described that way? Does this verse give us any understanding of such scriptures as Matthew 19:21–26 and Mark 10:21–27?

Together, verses 29–30 seem to connect learning with riches. Why might they do so? What is the connection? Given the small population to whom Jacob is speaking, all of them family, who could be either wise or rich?

**Verses 34–37:** Does Jacob’s warning turn to a different kind of sin here? If so, what is the difference? What is the similarity of the sins of these verses to those of verses 28–33?

**Verse 37:** In what sense is this verse the culmination of the list that began in verse 28?

**Verse 38:** What does it mean to die in one’s sins? How do we avoid that?
**Verse 39:** Compare this verse to Romans 8:6 and 1 Corinthians 2:11–16. What does it mean to be “carnally-minded”? To be “spiritually-minded”?

**Verse 40:** When Jacob asks us to remember the greatness of the Holy One of Israel, what kinds of things does he want us to remember? What kinds of things show that greatness did he mention in the quotation from Isaiah? What other things has he mentioned?

**Verses 41–43:** As you read through these verses, focus on the various types or symbols Jacob uses. What do they show us? How do they connect his prophecy to other prophecies, specifically to what he has quoted from Isaiah?

Notice that Jacob once again connects learning and wealth in verse 42, as he did in verses 29–30.

**Verse 44:** Might Jacob’s shaking of his garment have anything to do with 2 Nephi 8:23, 25 and 9:14?

**Verse 45:** Notice how the command to shake off our chains resonates with the previous verse (and its reference to other verses) to tie these things together.

**Verses 47–48:** What does Jacob imply about our feeling that we mustn’t ever say harsh things to one another? Under what circumstances would such harshness be permitted? How do we avoid using verses like this as an excuse for unnecessary and unkind harshness?

**Verse 50:** Jacob quotes Isaiah again (Isaiah 55:1–2). Isaiah’s words seem never to be far from his thoughts as he delivers his sermon. Why might that be? The connection between the two seems to demand that we think about the relation
of what he says to what Isaiah says if we are to understand fully Jacob’s message.

What is the point of this verse? How does it relate to such things as Paul’s letter to the Romans where he teaches that salvation comes by grace?

**Verse 51:** How does verse 50 help explain this verse? What is of value? What is free? What is of no worth?

**Verse 52:** What is the relation of this verse to the two that immediately precede it?

**Verse 53:** In what sense is this a repetition of everything that has been said in the last several chapters?

Does thinking in terms of types and shadows throw any light on this verse?

Is Jacob drawing a parallel between covenants and condescensions? If so, what does that parallel teach us?

**2 Nephi 10**

**Verse 2:** What does Jacob mean when he says the promises that have been made are promises according to the flesh?

**Verse 3ff.:** The word *Christ* is a title, not a name. Why does Jacob speak of it as a name? Why does Jacob repeat once again the prophecy of Christ’s coming and death? Why does he feel the need to tell the Nephites of this over and over when they aren’t going to have part in it? Is there anything here that they can apply to themselves? How?

**Verses 20–23:** Does this answer the previous question? How? Why would knowing that our knowledge is from
God mean that we ought not to hang down our heads? (Compare this to 2 Nephi 4:26ff.)

In verse 20, does Jacob assume that he is on an island?

Why does Jacob connect his teaching to what his father taught (compare verse 23 with 2:27–29)?

**Verse 24:** What does Jacob mean when he says that it is only in and through the grace of God that we are saved after we are reconciled? How have we seen that explained in the previous chapters?