
2 Nephi 4 — Lehi's Death, the Brothers' Anger, and the Psalm of Nephi

Lehi dies; the family fractures; Nephi sings a confessional lament-psalm, c. 588 BC.

The chapter divides into two halves. First half: Lehi's final blessings to grandchildren, his death, and the brothers' immediate anger against Nephi. Second half: the Psalm of Nephi — a Hebrew lament-psalm in the David tradition. *O wretched man that I am!* prefigures Paul's Rom. 7:24 by six centuries. The arc follows the classic Psalter shape: complaint → remembered grace → petition → reaffirmed trust.

Ten Insights

- 1. Grandchildren blessed (vv. 3–11).** The patriarch reaches around the rebellious sons to plant the covenant directly in the next generation.
- 2. Generational curse breakable (v. 7).** *The cursing may be taken from you and be answered upon the heads of your parents* — Ezek. 18:20 in patriarchal form.
- 3. Lehi's death in 3 verbs (v. 12).** *Spoke. Waxed old. Died.* The brevity is doctrinal. The patriarch's office is complete once the blessings are given.
- 4. Brothers angry — same dynamic.** With Lehi gone the only check on the older sons' anger is removed. The wilderness pattern returns immediately.
- 5. Soul delighteth in scriptures (v. 15).** *Chaphets + hagah* — the psalm-1 disciple. Nephi opens by announcing his contemplative posture.
- 6. O wretched man (v. 17).** The lament-psalmist's self-description (Hebrew *ani*). Prefigures Rom. 7:24. Saintly self-recrimination is in the lineage.
- 7. Recount past deliverances.** *He hath led me through mine afflictions; he hath preserved me upon the waters.* Anamnesis — remembering as faith-stiffening.
- 8. Refuse to nurse anger (vv. 27–29).** *Awake, my soul! Do not anger again because of mine enemies.* The psalm names the bitterness and refuses it.
- 9. Robe of righteousness (v. 33).** *Me'il tzedakah* — Isa. 61:10. Praying to be clothed in an alien righteousness over one's own *ani*-poverty.
- 10. Bitachon — closing trust (v. 34).** *I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever.* Trust at the end is the disciple's signature.

Cross-References

Ex. 20:5 (visiting iniquity); Lev. 16 (scapegoat); Deut. 6; Deut. 30:19; 2 Sam. 22 / Ps. 18 (David's song); Ps. 1:2 (meditate / hagah); Ps. 13 (lament); Ps. 22 (my God, why hast thou forsaken me); Ps. 51 (broken heart, contrite spirit); Ps. 57:8; Ps. 73; Ps. 130 (out of the depths); Prov. 3:5 (trust); Isa. 12:2; Isa. 61:10 (robe of righteousness); Jer. 17:5 (cursed is he that trusteth in man); Ezek. 18:20 (son shall not bear iniquity); Rom. 7:24 (*O wretched man that I am*); Gal. 3:27 (put on Christ); 1 Ne. 1:20 (tender mercies); 1 Ne. 2:16; 2 Ne. 2:6–7; Alma 36; D&C 121:1–6 (Joseph's lament).

Apocryphal Correlations

Hodayot (1QH — Qumran Thanksgiving Hymns). The community's personal-lament psalm corpus, in the David tradition. Same form, same *wretched man* idiom. Nephi's psalm participates in this living genre.

Prayer of Manasseh. A penitential prayer attributed to King Manasseh — *I am bowed down with many iron bands... I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned.* The same lament-confession idiom.

Sirach 51:1–12 (Ben Sira's thanksgiving). *I will thank thee, O Lord and King, and praise thee, O God my Saviour.* The same psalter form in roughly Nephi's era.

4 Maccabees 6, 17 (Eleazar's prayer). A martyr's lament-prayer in personal-psalm idiom. Demonstrates the genre's continuity into late Second-Temple Judaism.

Psalms of Solomon 8–16. Late-Second-Temple psalter — personal laments and trust-psalms in David tradition. Same shape Nephi works in.

Hebrew Word Studies

hagah (הָגָה, "meditate / mutter") — v. 16. Ps. 1:2's contemplative chewing on scripture.

ani (אֲנִי, "poor / afflicted") — v. 17 background. The Psalter's repeated self-description of the lamenting saint.

ur (עָרַע, "awake / rouse") — v. 28. The resurrection-imperative turned on one's own grieving soul. Ps. 57:8; Ps. 108:2.

tzur yeshu'ati (צֶרֶת יֵשׁוּעִי, "rock of my salvation") — v. 30. David's epithet from Ps. 18:46. The covenant-rock image.

me'il tzedakah (מִעַל טְדָקָה לִי, "robe of righteousness") — v. 33. Isa. 61:10. To be clothed in the Lord's righteousness over one's own.

bitachon (בִּטְחוֹן, "trust / confidence") — v. 34. The covenant-trust noun. Ps. 31:14; Prov. 3:5; Isa. 12:2.

Personal Application

Three things. First, the prophet is wretched, too. Nephi calls himself wretched after seeing visions and slaying Laban. Your self-recriminations on a hard day are not evidence of failure; they are evidence that you are in the lineage. Second, the form holds the grief. The Psalter is one of the gifts the Lord left for you to use. Pick a lament psalm — 22, 42, 51, 73, 130 — and pray it slowly. Third, trust at the end. The psalm closes with I will trust in thee forever — not because the trial has ended, but because bitachon is the disciple's signature in spite of trial.