
3 Nephi 4 — Hosanna to the Most High God — The Robbers Broken and the Song of Deliverance

3 Nephi 4: the war's climax. The gathered Nephites have starved the robbers of plunder — the land left desolate, the flocks and provisions all drawn into one body with seven years' supply. Forced to fight or perish, Giddianhi marches up in the nineteenth year with a terrifying army: girded as robbers, dyed in blood, heads shorn, lamb-skins about their loins. The Nephites fall to the earth — but in supplication, not fear — and rise to meet them 'in the strength of the Lord.' The slaughter is the greatest since Lehi left Jerusalem, but the Nephites prevail; Giddianhi himself, fighting boldly, is overtaken and slain. Two years later a new leader, Zemnarihah, lays siege — but the siege starves the besiegers, not the besieged, and when the robbers try to withdraw, Gidgiddoni cuts off their retreat front and rear; thousands surrender, the rest are slain, and Zemnarihah is hanged upon a tree, the tree then felled to the earth with a cry that all who seek to destroy God's people by secret combinations be likewise felled. Then the gathered people break forth as one in song, weeping for joy, crying 'Hosanna to the Most High God' and 'Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty,' and praising the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for delivering them — knowing it was because of their repentance and humility that they were saved from everlasting destruction. The chapter is the vindication of the strategy of chapter 3: the patient, gathered, repentant, waiting people delivered in the strength of the Lord, their fear turned to the great cry of salvation — Hosanna.

This is the payoff chapter — the moment the patient, counterintuitive strategy of chapter 3 is vindicated, and a people who refused both surrender and aggression are delivered exactly as their prophet-general promised. And Mormon ends it not with a military report but with a *song* — the whole gathered nation breaking forth, weeping for joy, crying *Hosanna to the Most High God* (v. 32). That ending is the key to the chapter. The victory matters, but what Mormon wants us to feel is the *deliverance* — the overwhelming gratitude of a people who knew they had been saved not by their own strength but by the goodness of God, and who responded the only way a delivered people can: with a cry of praise that is, at its root, the cry *save now*, turned into thanksgiving for the salvation already given.

Hebrew Word Studies

hoshia-na (הָשִׁיאוּנָא) — "save now! save, we pray!" — ***hoshia***, the imperative of ***yasha***, "to save, deliver, rescue"; ***na***, a particle of entreaty, "please, we pray." ***Hoshia-na*** (which becomes "***Hosanna***") is literally a desperate plea — "save now!" — that in worship becomes a shout of praise to the God who saves v. 32 (***Hosanna to the Most High God. And they did cry: Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty***). The cry that crowns this chapter — ***Hosanna*** — is one of the most beautiful words in all of scripture, and its meaning is far richer than the praise-shout it became. ***Hosanna*** is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew ***hoshia-na***, and ***hoshia-na*** is not, originally, a word of praise at all — it is a *plea*. It is the imperative of ***yasha***, "to save, deliver, rescue" (the same root that gives the name ***Yeshua*** / ***Jesus***, "the Lord saves"), with the entreaty particle ***na***, "please, I pray." ***Hoshia-na*** means, literally, "***Save now!***" — "***Save, we pray!***" — the desperate cry of people in danger begging God for rescue. Its great scriptural home is Psalm 118, the climactic Hallel psalm: *Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord (anna Adonai hoshia-na): O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity* (Ps. 118:25) — a cry for salvation in the midst of distress, sung at the festivals as the people waved branches and pleaded for God's deliverance. And here is the wonder of the word, and of this chapter: the cry *Save now!* becomes, in the mouth of the *delivered*, a shout of praise. The Nephites have just been saved — rescued from the everlasting destruction the robbers intended — and they cry ***Hosanna***, "Save now!" Why cry *save now* when the salvation has already come? Because ***hoshia-na*** is the cry of a people who know themselves utterly dependent on God's saving — and in the mouth of the rescued, the plea for salvation transforms into the joyful acclamation of the God who saves. It is at once a thanksgiving for the deliverance just given and a confession that all their hope, now and always, is in the God who alone can save. This is why ***Hosanna*** became the supreme festal shout, and why it would one day ring out on a road into Jerusalem: ***Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*** (Matt. 21:9) — the crowds crying *Save now!* to the One whose very name means *the Lord saves*, waving their branches as the true Deliverer rode in. The Nephites' ***Hosanna*** in 3 Nephi 4 is a foreshadowing of that cry, and indeed of the ***Hosanna*** the multitude will shout when the risen Christ himself descends among them (3 Ne. 11). And there is a deep fitness in the pairing of their cry: ***Hosanna to the Most High God and Blessed be the name of the Lord God Almighty*** (v. 32) — the same coupling as Psalm 118 and the triumphal entry, ***Hosanna... Blessed is he that cometh***. The delivered people instinctively reach for the festal language of salvation, crying *save now* to the God who has saved and *will save*, blessing his name. ***Hosanna*** is the word of the rescued who know they will always need rescuing — the plea and the praise fused into one, the cry of a people whose whole life, in danger and in deliverance alike, is a leaning on the God who saves. *The Lord saves* — that is the meaning hidden in the word, and the meaning hidden in the Name, and the meaning the whole chapter sings: a people delivered by grace, crying ***Hosanna***, *save now*, to the Most High God.

From the Chapter's Architecture

```cross-references Ps. 118:25–26 (*Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord — hoshia-na... Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord — the source of the Hosanna... Blessed be the name cry*, v. 32); Matt. 21:9 (*Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord — the triumphal-entry cry the Nephites anticipate*, v. 32); 2 Sam. 22:2–4 (*the Lord is my rock... I will call on the Lord... so shall I be saved from mine enemies — the God who saves, yasha, the root of Hosanna*); Ex. 14:13–14 (*stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord... the Lord shall fight for you — the delivered people who waited*, vv. 10, 33); Ex. 15:1–18 (*the Song of the Sea after deliverance — the song of the saved*, vv. 31–32); 1 Sam. 17:45–47 (*David: thou comest to me with a sword... but I come to thee in the name of the Lord... the battle is the Lord's — the strength of the Lord against the terror of the enemy*, v. 10); Deut. 21:22–23 (*he that is hanged is accursed of God — the hanging of Zemnarihah on a tree*, vv. 28–29); 3 Ne. 3:21 (*Gidgiddoni's we will wait till they shall come against us — the strategy this chapter vindicates*); 3 Ne. 3:7–9 (*Giddianhi's threat and his claim that the secret society is good — answered by his death*, v. 14, and the felling of the combination, v. 29); 3 Ne. 11:14–17 (*the multitude crying Hosanna and falling at the feet of the descending Christ — the greater Hosanna this one foreshadows*); Alma 48:14–16 (*the defensive ethic and the God who warns and delivers the Nephites — the strength of the Lord*, v. 10). ```