

Mosiah 4 — Fallen as Dead — The Cry for Mercy, Retaining a Remission, Are We Not All Beggars, and Watch Yourselfs

Mosiah 4: The people collapse as dead after the angel's message. They cry for mercy and for the atoning blood of Christ, and they receive a remission of sins and peace of conscience. Benjamin keeps going — this time on how to hold on to that remission: give to the beggar, help the needy, watch yourselves. c. 124 BC.

If Mosiah 3 was the doctrine, Mosiah 4 is what happens when doctrine lands on a real crowd of real people. The angel's message about Christ has just been delivered, and the whole multitude goes down. They collapse. They cry out. They receive mercy. And then Benjamin, watching them rise, tells them how to keep what they've just been given. That's the shape of the chapter: doctrine, then experience, then a way of life.

Load-Bearing Texts

1. v. 2. *O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins* — the cry itself, aimed not at mercy in the abstract but at applied, atoning blood.
2. v. 12. *ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins* — forgiveness as a state you keep, not just a moment you visit.
3. v. 19. *are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have?* — the line people carry for the rest of their lives.
4. v. 26. *for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day... I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor* — charity tied straight to forgiveness.
5. v. 30. *watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds* — the whole ethic in a single breath.

Hebrew Word Studies

rachem / *dam ha-kippurim* / *yirah* (רָחַם / מִיִּרְכָּה פֶּד / הֵאָרַי) — **have mercy, womb-compassion / blood of atonements / fear, reverent awe vv. 1–2.** Three words sit under these two verses — mercy, blood, and fear. *Rachem* is the verb for mercy, and it comes from *rechem*, the word for a womb; it's the Old Testament's tenderest word for compassion, the kind a mother feels for the child she carried. *Dam ha-kippurim* is the technical term for the blood of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27–28) — not blood in general, but the blood that covers sin. And *yirah* is the reverent fear behind Proverbs 1:7, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*. Put them together and you have the whole scene: the people ask for *rachem*, they ask for it through *dam ha-kippurim*, and they ask from a posture of *yirah*. It's the cry of the Psalms — *have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness... according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies* (Ps. 51:1), and Zacharias' song, *through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us* (Luke 1:78). The Restoration keeps the same logic when it promises the Lord will come with his reward for every man (D&C 88:104). The point is simple and it runs deep: God's womb-tender mercy reaches a trembling person through applied, atoning blood.

evyon / *chesed* / *kol mah she-yesh lanu* (וְיָלַךְ / וְיָלַךְ / וְיָלַךְ) — **needy, beggar, poor / loving-kindness, covenantal mercy / all that we have vv. 16–19.** Three phrases stand behind the beggar section. *Evyon* is the needy one, the beggar — the word behind Exodus 23:6, *the cause of thy poor*. *Chesed* is loving-kindness, the covenantal mercy that is God's signature. And *kol mah she-yesh lanu* is simply "all that we have." Line them up and Benjamin's logic snaps into focus: you are an *evyon*; God's *chesed* is what gave you everything you own; so refusing *chesed* to another *evyon* is refusing to be honest about what you are. It's the heart of the poverty laws — *thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor (evyon), and to thy needy* (Deut. 15:7–11) — and the cry of the Psalms, *God delivereth the poor (evyon) from him that is too strong for him* (Ps. 35:10), and Isaiah's promise to the day *when the poor (evyon) and needy seek water, and there is none* (Isa. 41:17). The Restoration says it plainly too: *thou shalt remember the poor... and consecrate of thy properties for their support* (D&C 42:30–31). Before God, every disciple is an *evyon*. The mercy you got is the mercy you now owe.

From the Chapter's Architecture

Which is finally what this chapter teaches about charity. It's not how you buy your way in; you're already in. It's how you stay soft once you're there. John asked the hard question: whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (1 John 3:17). Benjamin's answer, worked out across twenty verses, is that a closed hand and a retained remission can't live in the same person.