



Daddy, Do Not

BY BRENT A. BARLOW

The blessings of turning the hearts of the children to the fathers will come as we become familiar with the faith and trials, joys and sorrows of our ancestors.

James Nathaniel Barlow was born on May 8, 1841, in Nauvoo, Illinois, to Israel and Elizabeth Haven Barlow. He died a few hours after his birth and was buried in a small cemetery in a field in Nauvoo. The memory of his short life might have been lost or confined to simply a name, date, and place if his father, Israel, had not written a letter to his wife, Elizabeth, on September 12, 1853.

Israel's letter was in response to his wife's request for him to stop in Nauvoo as he traveled from their home in Salt Lake City to his mission in England. Elizabeth wanted Israel to locate their little son's grave and rebury James in the main cemetery east of Nauvoo. Israel agreed.

Searching for the Grave

On Wednesday, August 31, 1853, Israel spent the day looking for the place where little James Nathaniel was buried but could not find it. "The flowers that were around his grave were all destroyed but the morning glories were spread some two rods [33 feet, or 10 meters] or more around his grave," Israel wrote of his search. "They made a very beautiful appearance on the weeds and potatoes that were growing there; however, they did not aid me in finding the grave."¹

The next day Israel sought the help of George Holman, the man who cared for the area. They dug around and found the little graves of James and his cousin Mary side by



Leave Me Here

side. The coffins were broken and the remains were in disarray. For a moment, as Israel gazed upon the scene, he gave up on the idea of removing the remains to the new cemetery.

“Something spoke, seemingly twice: Move it, move it,” Israel’s letter continued.

“It seemed quite an undertaking as my time was mostly spent. . . . I therefore turned away and concluded that I would leave them there until the future. . . .

“I had not gone over more than one rod when I heard a voice. Shall I say it was not audible, but so distinct to my mind that I could [hear] it say, ‘Daddy, do not leave me here.’ I turned about again and walked to the grave and . . . concluded that I would remove my little boy at any rate. I felt a peculiar calm and peace of mind which



BECOMING ACQUAINTED

“It remains the responsibility of each individual to know his kindred dead. . . . Even if the [temple] work is done, then it is still each person’s responsibility to study and become acquainted with his ancestors.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith quoted in *Hearts Turned to the Fathers: A History of the Genealogical Society of Utah, 1894–1994* (1995), 184.

before I did not feel. . . . But this much I will say—that I never was more conscientious of any duty done in my life.”²

Reburying James and Mary

On Friday, September 2, Israel and Mr. Holman took the bodies to the Nauvoo Burying Ground. “There I interred my little boy the second time with Mary, his cousin,” wrote Israel. “There remains now a rude stone to tell where they are with the letters cut on in a rude and imperfect manner: ‘J. N. Barlow.’ . . . After setting the stones at the head and foot of the graves, the time of my departure had come.

Could I go away? No! There was something that caused my feelings to linger there and bound me fast. . . . I felt a desire to dedicate myself and all that I might call mine into the hands



of the Lord that I might be counted worthy to come forth with [my son] in the morning of the First Resurrection. . . . The last thread of affection I bore till it was broken with tears on his grave. I then closed the ceremony.”³

When we go beyond finding just the names, dates, and places of our ancestors, we can truly enjoy the blessings of turning our hearts to our fathers and, as with Israel Barlow, to our children (see Malachi 4:6). Just as this letter gave insight into the lives of Israel and Elizabeth Barlow, as well as into the lives of others who lived during that time period, stories, letters, and heirlooms can help us come to know our ancestors. We are, after all, not simply clerks recording their passing. We are their family. ■

NOTES

1. Ora H. Barlow, *The Israel Barlow Story and Mormon Mores* (1968), 306; spelling and punctuation modernized.
2. Ora H. Barlow, 306–7.
3. Ora H. Barlow, 307–8.

HOW TO GO BEYOND NAMES, DATES, AND PLACES

1. Visit with relatives. They may have stories, letters, photographs, or heirlooms you could copy.

2. Go to familysearch.org. Click on the heading “Library” and a drop down-menu will appear. Click on “Library Catalog.” Here you can search the holdings of the family history library in Salt Lake City. A place search may reveal county histories, which often have biographies of residents. A surname search may locate a printed family history with stories and photographs of your ancestors. Copies of these records on microfilm can be ordered at local family history centers.

3. Search online. Many family history sites, such as www.rootsweb.ancestry.com, have message boards where you can inquire about specific ancestors.

4. Write your own accurate account of an ancestor’s life by finding what details you can and then by weaving together any local, national, or international history with the names, dates, and places of their life.