



The Love of a Father

By Amie Jane Leavitt

(Based on a story from the life of John Taylor)

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you

(John 15:9).

For weeks, Nauvoo had been buzzing with activity. Wagons clattered along frozen streets. People rushed to and fro carrying packages and carting barrels of food. Joseph Taylor knew he would not see this scene much longer. Soon, the Saints would be leaving their homes on the bank of the Mississippi River to travel west.

"Joseph, I need you to load the wagon," his mother called from the kitchen.

Joseph had been avoiding this for days. He didn't mind helping, but he knew that once the wagon was loaded, they'd have to leave.

A scratchy burlap sack tickled his face as he lifted it into the wagon's shallow bed. His family had hardly even started packing, yet the wagon was almost full.

"Where are we putting everything else?" Joseph asked his mother as he picked up another sack in the kitchen.

"We're only taking the necessities, Joseph," his mother said. "I thought you understood that. There just isn't enough room for everything."

Joseph's eyes started to fill with tears. It was bad enough leaving his comfortable home, but now they



had to leave all of their favorite things too.

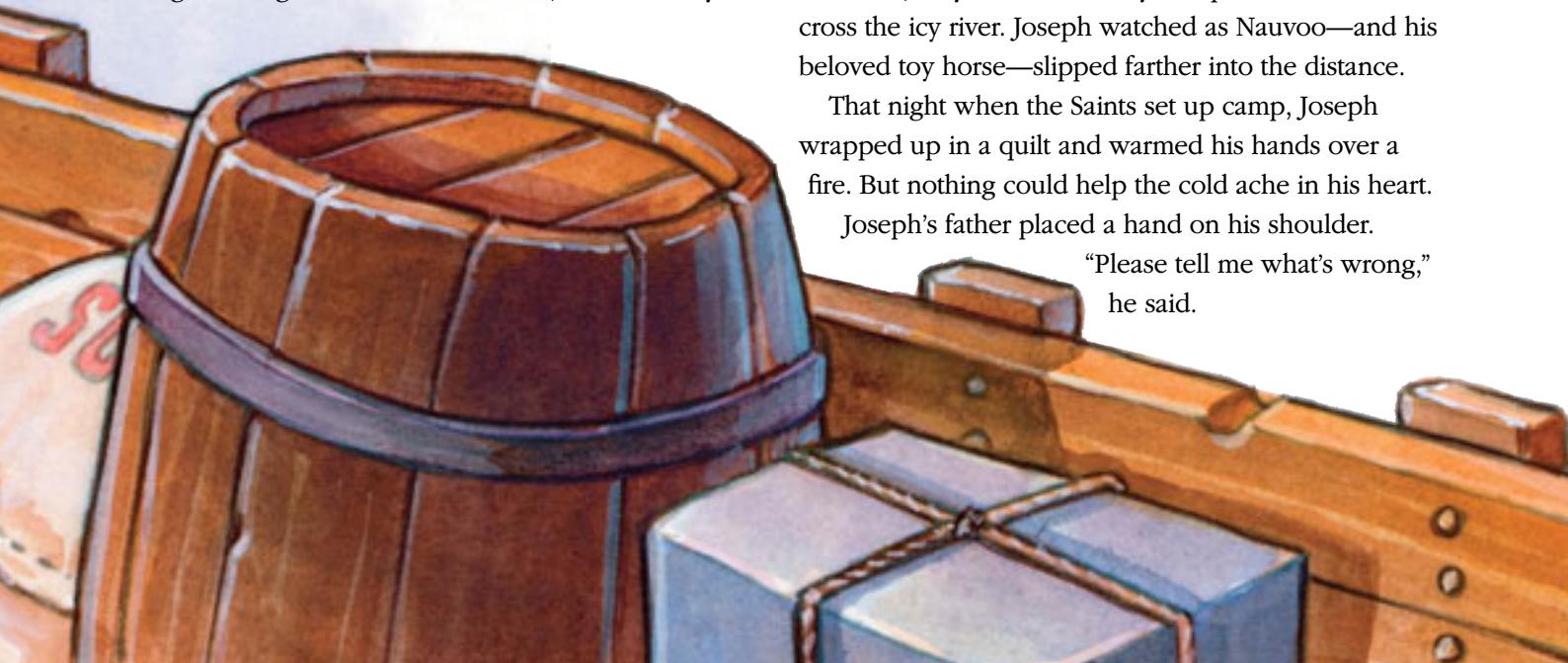
Joseph ran upstairs and into the toy room. It was his favorite part of the house. He had spent hours here imagining grand adventures while riding his wooden rocking horse that his father had carved for him. Joseph ran his hand over the horse and felt its golden mane of real horsehair. He realized that he would have to say good-bye to it forever.

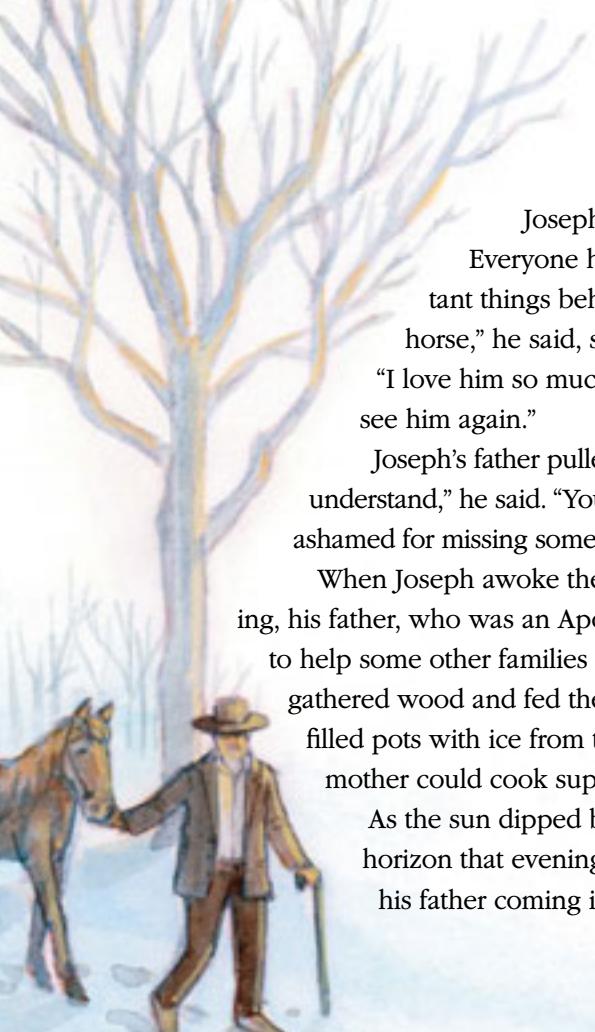
On a frosty morning, Joseph's family tied the canvas covering over their wagon and shut the door of their home for the last time. After inching their way through the snow, they boarded a ferry and pushed off to cross the icy river. Joseph watched as Nauvoo—and his beloved toy horse—slipped farther into the distance.

That night when the Saints set up camp, Joseph wrapped up in a quilt and warmed his hands over a fire. But nothing could help the cold ache in his heart.

Joseph's father placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Please tell me what's wrong," he said.





Joseph felt foolish. Everyone had left important things behind. "I miss my horse," he said, starting to cry. "I love him so much, and I'll never see him again."

Joseph's father pulled him close. "I understand," he said. "You shouldn't feel ashamed for missing something you love."

When Joseph awoke the next morning, his father, who was an Apostle, had left to help some other families in need. Joseph gathered wood and fed the animals. He filled pots with ice from the creek so his mother could cook supper.

As the sun dipped below the horizon that evening, Joseph saw his father coming into camp.

He looked exhausted. Ever since he had been injured at Carthage, he had needed to use a cane to help him walk. Today he was limping more than usual. His face was red from the cold, and there was snow on his jacket.

"But it hasn't snowed all day," Joseph thought. "Where has Father been?"

Then he saw it. Tied to his father's horse was Joseph's rocking horse. His father had ridden all the way back to Nauvoo, across the icy Mississippi River, and risked being caught by the angry mobs just to retrieve Joseph's beloved horse.

"I think he'll like going on this adventure to the West, don't you?" his father asked as Joseph raced into his outstretched arms. ♦



Joseph's father, John Taylor, served as President of the Church after Brigham Young. The rocking horse (shown above, 20 inches tall by 34 inches long) traveled all the way to the Salt Lake Valley. Today, it can be found in the upstairs toy room of the John Taylor home in Nauvoo, Illinois.

