

Sunday November 4, 1979
Tracy Jr. and Betsy
Orem, City of Happenings

Dear family,

It's been so long since I last wrote that I've forgotten what's news and what isn't. Our little Utah baby, Elizabeth, had her first birthday Oct. 25, which made us realize how fast time is slipping by. She is really a sweet little rosebud, patient, happy, impish, loved and enjoyed by all her brothers and sisters. She's at the stage where she likes to play games--today she was picking imaginary objects out of her mother's hands, replacing them, and demanding them back.

Richard Alexander is still R to me and A to Betsy, but seems not to be developing any schizophrenia. Indeed, he threatens to be the impossible--a mild, reasonable two year old. He is such a good boy! It breaks my heart when I correct him (a spanking is almost never needed) and him answers "alright, Daddy" or "OK, mom" through his tears. He is finally talking, and is now using sentences and is easy to understand. I only have one complaint--his habit of awakening an hour before I want to and yelling for his Daddy. Betsy tells me I should consider it a blessing, that my son wants me in the morning. I suppose.

Our morning family University kind of fell apart after a month or two, with the children's boredom with my dull lessons and the difficulty in getting them all up, together, and attentive--but shortly thereafter we hit upon the solution. I now spend 30-45 minutes alone one morning a week with each child, studying whatever they choose. You can bet that no child wants to miss his morning, and that Daddy can't get away with missing a day, either. We went through a cycle where they each wanted to grow a crystal--Zina's ammonium alum and Robert's borax are doing beautifully. Tracy and I are learning Greek together (at four letters per week it will be a few years, but so what!) and chemistry; Zina likes to read the scriptures, do artsy crafty things, or play cards; Mary played "Perquacky" (an excellent spelling teaching tool) three weeks in a row, Robert likes stories and games, as does Susanna--I was surprised to realize how little I knew about what she knows and can learn; I think if I didn't have this tool I could let some of my kids just slip through the cracks. I was originally sharing S & RA's morning, but found it better to just spend the time with S alone, and I spend a lot of time with RA caring for his needs, anyway. It's when a child makes that transition to being potty trained and able to dress himself that their greatest need for formal individual attention arises, I'm convinced, and I think I can attribute now many of Susanna's behavioral difficulties to that unfilled need. She's beginning now to feel more secure of herself and find satisfaction in becoming a "big girl;" for instance, tonight she wanted to sleep in her slip and for a while I tried to force my will on her when it dawned on ME that no harm could come from giving her a choice, so I said "alright, S, you can choose. You can sleep in your nice Sunday school slip and get it wrinkly, or you can hang it up in your closet so it will be nice for next Sunday and sleep in your pajamas. You choose." And she chose right! --But I would have had to accept also a "wrong" choice without disparagement or retribution..

Teaching Elders' Quorum has really been a blessing to me. I almost get too much satisfaction from it. We really have some fine men in our quorum and the spirit there is never one of contention or disputation, and I just always feel that our insights into the scriptures and their application to our lives have come together beautifully. A few weeks ago we had a lesson on the gathering of Israel that happened to coincide with the Jewish festival of "succoth" -- tabernacles, and as I read a book about the festival, I was struck with the impression that this at least was a major theme of the observance, although not understood or stressed by the Jewish commentators, and I had all kinds of fun describing the observances and tying them into latter-day scripture and the theme of gathering, its connection with the four species, the booth (much temple symbolism here, some of which we couldn't even discuss), and the themes of Ezekiel 37 (dry bones and two sticks). Did you know that in some synagogues, at the conclusion of the festival, they bless the children to become as Ephraim and Menasseh, and that on Simchat Torah (rejoicing of the Torah--last day of Succoth) some synagogues had the children parade with sticks capped with lanterns made from gourds carrying banners, some saying (with typical Jewish literalism) "For Ephraim" and others-- "for Judah"-- all without realizing that the prophecy they were symbolizing deals with new scripture that will grow together with their beloved Torah to prove that Jesus is the Christ! Incidentally, did you know that we, too, will someday observe this festival, or we won't receive rain in our lands, after the gathering is complete? (Zechariah 14).

I had been telling some of these things to the family as I was preparing my lesson, and one day in Sacrament meeting when Tracy was bored he asked me to show him the scripture about the dry bones (upon which Jewish and "Christian" commentators are in perfect agreement that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the resurrection--phooey to them), and after reading it, he pointed out to me "sure Dad, it does refer to the feast of tabernacles-- see this verse about the four winds calling forth the spirits of the dead -how it's like the four kinds of branches--and here the Lord will make his tabernacle with them (v. 27 9, 27, Ezekiel 37)-- things I had completely overlooked. When that boy goes on his mission, I want to go as his companion!

Betsy's health is slowly improving and her increased thyroid dosage seems to be helping her gain strength and energy. I hope, too, that my priesthood lessons have had enough influence on me to make me a little easier to live with.

Western Widget Co. continues its progress in bits and pieces--mostly pieces. I finally licked the stainless steel adhesion problem and have a really beautiful bur that performs excellently and which I can be proud of, and I'm gearing up for my own direct mail sales program while Alan and his partner Ron speak optimistically of deals afoot. It looks like financially we'll be going pretty close to disaster, but then, what's life without a little excitement! Kind thoughts for you all and wishes for a mild winter. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be all together at Thanksgiving? When I'm rich I'll be sending lots of airplane tickets around the country. Until then, just wishes..

Love, Tracy J.

very easy to live with in case anyone cares

or what ever