

THE

WITNESS

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Again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.

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(2 Nephi 14:6)

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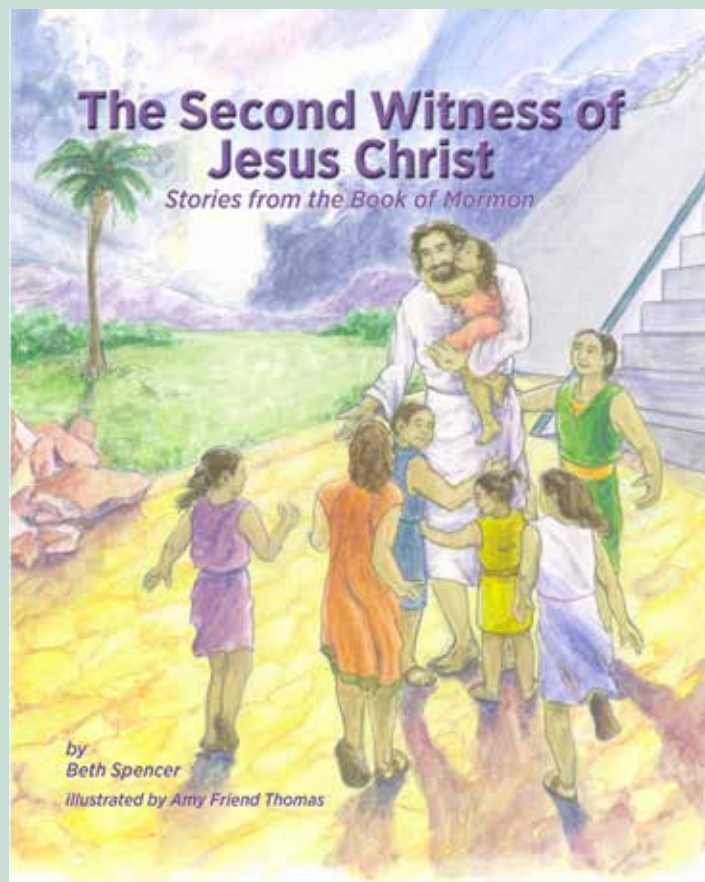
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**Watch therefore;
for ye know
neither the day
nor the hour
wherein the Son
of Man cometh.**

Matthew 25:12

SECRET COMBINATIONS

by Marlin Guin

As I write this article, June 2024, I'm reminded how the Lord told us to watch and pray always. If we are watching, then what are some of the things we are seeing? We see demonstrations of college students and outside agitators shouting, **death to Israel, death to America, from the river to the sea, and by any means necessary.** They protest while hiding in the darkness of night and keeping their identity secret by wearing masks and face coverings, all while being funded by what is called **dark money.** We see people killing our unborn children in an industry that operates in secrecy, while enjoying the protection of laws created by the leaders of our nation. We see a 76-year-old grandmother, in poor health, arrested outside an abortion clinic for attempting to dissuade women from getting abortions. She was later sentenced to two years in prison. She was mocked as the judge told her in the sentencing statement, "Make an effort to stay alive as that is a tenet of faith." We see our government, all political parties, being totally dysfunctional; and sacrificing everything for political power and gain, while operating in secret with backroom deals and secret agreements made between the privileged, the wealthy, the elect and special interest groups. We see our nation pointing a finger at God in defiance and ignoring His commandment to bless Israel in the latter days. We see members of secret combinations coming across our borders with the intent to do harm to our nation, our people and our way of life. Just today, eight people with suspected ties to ISIS were arrested in a sting operation in New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. We see those who believe in Christ being persecuted by these secret

combinations in every way imaginable. We see more and more people mocking and scoffing at God and His word, as truth is defined to be whatever they want it to be at the time. We see all the iniquities that are preparing our nation and our world for certain judgment, including sexual perversions that were once done in secret but now have come to the forefront of acceptance and even openly promoted by our society. Even now, we see the jubilant celebration of Pride Month and realize how many of our leaders, citizens and churches have been manipulated by secret combinations to support this iniquity. Just today, San Francisco declared itself a sanctuary city for transgender people. In all these things we have to wonder: **How can any Book of Mormon believer not know that secret combinations have come over the land?**

Our nation is moving toward a time of God's cursing as secret combinations influence those in power to withdraw their blessings and support away from Israel, God's covenant land and people; especially during a time when they are fighting for their right to exist. Either they don't know or don't care that God has already made everlasting covenants with Israel and He will not abandon them.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee shall the families of the earth be blessed.
(Genesis 12:2)

Our hearts break as we witness the weak response of Book of Mormon believers to the awful situation we are experiencing from the forces of darkness and secret combinations today. How can the words of Ether, the last Jaredite prophet, be so easily ignored and not stir all Book of Mormon believers to fall at the feet of Jesus and cry for mercy, direction and divine power? How can we not be willing to give up all our sins and forsake our kingdoms in preparation to hearken to the voice of Jesus when He speaks? It seems we have not yet been willing to do so at an acceptable level to Him. Perhaps it's because we believe in the book but do not really believe the words written in the book. (2 Nephi 12:80)

Wherefore the Lord commandeth you, **when ye shall see these things** come among you, that ye shall awake to a sense of your **awful situation**, because of this **secret combination** which shall be among you. (Ether 3:98)

Many people in the Restoration are not watching and have fallen asleep. The Lord cries out for us to wake up and look! How long have the generations of the Restoration treated lightly the Book of Mormon and the former commandments? Our generations continue to do the same and are living under our own version of the condemnation described in D&C 83:8a-c. All we have to do is observe the level of spiritual power among us, our spiritual fruits, and witness the continual dividing of the people, to know something isn't right. No matter what declarations we all make about ourselves, something just doesn't seem right!

The prophet Ether witnessed the destruction of his civilization and recorded what he had seen and heard. Likewise, Mormon and his son Moroni, both Nephite prophets, also witnessed the destruction of their civilization and recorded what they had seen and heard.

These prophets had first-hand knowledge of secret combinations and the destruction they brought upon the people. What they saw and heard caused them to plead for us in the last days to diligently watch for secret combinations. Otherwise, when it's too late, we will also witness the destruction of our civilization and record what we see and hear.

What did they see and hear? As we would expect, they saw the sins, iniquities and abominations of the people. They saw works of darkness. They saw

secret acts. But there is more! These sins, iniquities and abominations were bound together by secret oaths, founded by the devil, the father of all lies. The people who make this oath, join organizations and movements that pursue the same purposes and goals as their founder, the devil.

We should sense the deep concern of the Book of Mormon prophets concerning the existence and destructive power of secret combinations. In light of this warning to our day, why are secret combinations a subject seldom discussed publicly, even among Book of Mormon believers? Perhaps some people like to avoid conversations concerning the things they consider negative or depressing, or doom and gloom. Maybe they attend church for themselves and only want to hear what they like to hear that makes them feel good about themselves. Maybe they don't believe secret combinations actually exist or have relevance to their lives. Maybe they don't want people to think they are conspiracy theorists or radical thinkers. Maybe they don't believe the words of the prophets. I don't know, but I'm confident that Ether, Mormon and Moroni would find their answers unacceptable.



Let's examine briefly what these prophets say about secret combinations. There are many characteristics of them so we'll rely on scriptures to guide our brief study in truth. We know secret combinations have existed since the days of Cain, a murderer who made a secret oath with Satan. We know Satan is the founder of secret combinations. We know that power and gain are their motives and we know they operate in secret to take away the freedom of people, lands and countries. Mormon

said this about the day when the Book of Mormon would come forth and extend through the last days:

And it shall come in a day when the blood of the saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of **secret combinations and the works of darkness.** (Mormon 4:35)

The book of Ether seems to give the most detailed description of secret combinations and some of the characteristics to identify them. It also speaks about our response to them and the Lord's response as well. We will use those words as an outline along with some words from Moroni, the abridger of the book of Ether.

And it came to pass that they formed a **secret combination**, even as they of old; which combination is **most abominable and wicked above all**, in the sight of God; For the Lord **worketh not in secret combinations**, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man. And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their **oaths and combinations**, for it hath been made known unto me **that they are had among all people**, and they are had among the Lamanites, and they have **caused the destruction** of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the **destruction of the people of Nephi**; And whatsoever **nation shall uphold such secret combinations**, to get power and gain, **until they shall spread over the nation**, behold, they shall be destroyed, for the **Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints**, which shall be shed by them, shall **always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance** upon them, and yet he avenge them not; Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shewn unto you, that thereby ye may **repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain, and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you**; Yea, even the sword of the justice of the eternal God, shall **fall upon you**, to your overthrow and

destruction, if ye shall suffer these things to be; Wherefore **the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you, that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you**, or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who build it up. For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up, **seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations and countries**; And it **bringeth to pass the destruction of all people**; for it is **built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies**; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents; Yea, even that same liar who hath **caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men, that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.** Wherefore I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things, **that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.** (Ether 3:92-102)

Summary of Secret Combinations:

- They are formed to be wicked and abominable.
- The Lord doesn't work inside of them.
- They have oaths and combinations.
- They are had among all people.
- They cause destruction.
They seek power and gain.
- They seek to overthrow the freedom of lands, nations and countries.
- They are built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies.
- They murder the prophets, stone them and cast them out.

Our response:

- Repent and don't allow these murderous combinations to get above you.
- When we see them, awake to a sense of your awful situation.
- Fall at the feet of Jesus for mercy, direction and divine power.
- Do these things so evil may be done away, and the time may come when Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men; but they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.

God's response:

- He will avenge the saints who cry from the dust.
- Whatever nation upholds these secret combinations to get power and gain until they spread over the nation, shall be destroyed.
- If we suffer these things to be, the sword of God's justice will fall upon us to our overthrow and destruction.
- He protects and empowers the believers.

The first thing we should do is confess that secret combinations have come over the land. In so doing, engage in what the Lord has commanded us to do. We should pray mightily. We should repent and cry repentance with a voice of warning to our people, nation and world. We need to gather together and become one with Christ and each other. In 3 Nephi 2:27, we read how they gathered all the people and their possessions to the center of the land to fight against secret combinations. They gathered together and did exactly as the Lord commanded. Therefore, they were spared by the power of God. Does this principle of gathering sound familiar? There is a reason this account is included in the Book of Mormon. It's so Book of Mormon believers will know the day will come again when this same gathering will be required. The Lord will direct its fulfillment, so I recommend each person prepare by diligently studying the entire chapter. It's a chapter describing how they fought against secret combinations and achieved victory through obedience and the power of God.

How can we be a voice of warning, as commanded, by relegating that calling to others outside the Restoration? We seem to be hearing the voice of warning more today from people like Jonathan Cahn, Franklin Graham, Hal Lindsey, Jan Markell and many others. They are the ones standing in the public square and shouting aloud the call to repentance and the voice of warning.

After almost 200 years, have we retreated from our prophetic calling by speaking mostly to ourselves? Do we spend most of our time and energy trying to fix things in the church? Are we seeking to have power and dominion over men? Are we ministering the gospel of Christ or administering the church? Have we exhausted ourselves, spiritually and physically, by doing these things?

We can seek to identify the secret combinations among us by using the characteristics from the book of Ether. Why should we do that? Because they are real and require a courageous response from the believers in Christ, especially Book of Mormon believers. We need to speak against these secret combinations and warn others. Even when it's not the popular thing to do or carries some degree of risk. We need to be a voice of warning and lead others in a unified response according to the words of the Lord. **The Lord says we need to awake to a real sense of our awful situation** when they are among us and respond according to His word. We usually find it more difficult to wake up while enjoying the prosperity, wealth, abundance and comfort of our modern living. The Book of Mormon describes this complacency as a flaxen cord that gradually leads to destruction. I'm not sure how many people, even in the Restoration, understand the urgency of the admonition to **awake to the real sense of our awful situation**.

What does it mean for murderous combinations to get above us and what does **above us** mean? Just like the days of old, spiritual and physical murder are used to get gain and power, as people seek to have power and dominion over others. The words **above us** suggest there are secret combinations that have power to influence and even control our daily lives as they work to separate us from each other and Christ. Even worse, they often do those things with permission from a majority of the people. Unfortunately, it's a majority that includes many who identify themselves as Christians.

For our constitutional republic, one thing we can do is to never waste our vote. Our ballot choices should be based totally on the word of God. We should look for those people, if they can be found, that believe in Jesus and do not support or participate

in the great iniquities that bring destruction upon a nation. Jonathan Cahn said the three great iniquities that caused God to bring judgment on the northern kingdom of Israel were: sacrificing their children, all manner of sexual perversions and the worship of false gods.

We should study out the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, to understand the difference between sin and iniquity, remembering that all iniquities are sin but not all sins are iniquities. The Book of Mormon calls iniquities the **grosser crimes** that eventually cause God to respond. It also uses the phrase, **sins and iniquities** in several places. Most importantly, we must do all we can to become righteous. We must know the Lord personally and be prepared to hearken unto His voice when He speaks.

God's response to this wickedness is clear, as destruction and judgment come to those who reject Him and ripen in iniquity. In our day, Jesus



calls one of those judgments **the treading down of the Gentiles**, and we are beginning to see it even now. We must remember God's response to His people is also clear as He protects, empowers, blesses, brings miracles, signs and wonders, gifts of the Spirit and pours out His Spirit upon those who know Him. They will be a people with great faith and no fear. This is why we must prepare for both the descending of God's power as well as the pouring out of His wrath in judgment. We need to be prepared for the mighty movement of God in all the ways He speaks, both blessings and judgments. Remember, judgments are often used as stepping stones to a greater revelation of God. Both miracles

and judgments are ways that God speaks and are connected to the Lord's desire to save all who will hearken unto His voice.

In our day, it will be upon the ashes of the wicked (3 Nephi 9:46-56, 11:24) that God will empower the finishing of His work. Jesus said in 3 Nephi 10:1-4:

But if they will repent, and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant, and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance, and they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob; And also, as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem; And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst, and then shall the work of the Father commence, at that day even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people.

The Lord gives us the **what**, so we can identify the **who**, and respond according to His word. We can easily list a few obvious examples of where secret combinations are found today, such as: terror organizations, abortion industry, drug cartels, gangs, crime organizations, and LGBTQ organizations, to name a few. The list is very long but also very secret, with far more of them in existence than many of us know or want to know. It's also important to understand that some secret combinations not only operate in secret but also disguise themselves inside of organizations and movements that are perceived to do good things. Take the time, using the characteristics previously described in Ether, to make your own list of the secret combinations hidden within those organizations and movements.

One of the first rules of warfare is to know your enemy, so you can effectively engage in battle against them. Do you hear the voice of warning from the prophets concerning secret combinations today? I pray this article will be a voice of warning to the people who read it. For us right now, watch therefore, pray always and prepare for the great things coming upon the earth!

What Kinds of Swords Did Book of Mormon Peoples Use?



And how it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth. [Alma 24:17 LDS] (Alma 14:55 RLDS)

The Book of Mormon mentions swords 156 times in both literal and figurative senses.¹ Because the Book of Mormon is not available in its original language, its modern readers may envision a long, double-bladed metal weapon with a hilt, like those used by medieval European knights, when reading the English word **sword**. Such European-style metal swords have not been found in the ancient Americas, causing some critics to see Book of Mormon swords as an anachronism.² However, weapons that are in many ways functionally equivalent to swords and that have been called swords historically and in academic literature were used throughout pre-Columbian America.³

The best candidate—among many—for Book of Mormon swords is probably something like the **Aztec macuahuitl**, also sometimes referred to more generally as a **macana**.⁴ It consisted of a flat stick of hard wood lined with obsidian or flint blades, positioned either in a straight or serrated fashion. These were referred to as swords (**espadas**) by the Spaniards and are still called swords by many modern scholars.⁵ Similarly, the Aztecs called the Spanish swords **tepuzmacuahuitl**, meaning

metal macuahuitl.⁶ Clearly, both of those cultures saw a similarity between the two weapons. The straight-bladed version of the macuahuitl is best known among the later Aztecs, but variations of the weapon can be traced back to early Book of Mormon times.⁷ Because these weapons broke down so rapidly, almost none survive today and so our knowledge must be gleaned primarily from inscriptions, artwork, and colonial accounts.⁸

Some have regarded these weapons as being more like clubs than swords.⁹ While some Mesoamerican weapons seem to be something between a sword and a club, Spanish accounts clearly distinguish between swords, or macuahuitls, and clubs, as does the artwork in codices.¹⁰ Furthermore, unlike clubs but like European swords, the **Aztec macuahuitl** had cutting ability. Mesoamerican codices show images of human heads and limbs being cut off by these weapons, and some Spanish accounts describe the decapitation of horses with them.¹¹ This accords well with the Book of Mormon, which describes both arms and heads being sliced off by swords. [Alma 17:37–39; Ether 15:30–31 LDS] (Alma 12:56–58; Ether 6:104–105 RLDS)

In addition to the straight-bladed macuahuitl, several related Mesoamerican weapons of wood and stone existed that have been designated as swords, macanas, or macuahuitls by modern scholars but could also correspond to Book of Mormon scimitars and daggers, or even as axes, clubs, and other **weapons of every kind**.¹² Some had only a sharp wooden blade without stone inserts, some a serrated stone edge, and others a smooth stone edge.¹³ These weapons variously had pointed tips, blades on both sides, and curved structures, and they varied in length.¹⁴

Identifying the Book of Mormon sword with the macuahuitl raises a few questions but also answers many others. For example, what might the word **hilt** refer to in Alma 44:12 [LDS] (Alma 20:81-83 RLDS) and Ether 14:2 [LDS] (Ether 6:36 RLDS) if we understand the swords to be macuahuitls? In this case, the hilt would simply refer to the unbladed portion of the weapon, and drawing a sword [like in Mosiah 19:4; Alma 1:9, 19:22, 20:16 LDS] (Mosiah 9:77; Alma 1:13-14, 12:160, 12:200 RLDS) would mean raising it or pulling it from a bag, belt, or covering since sheaths did not seem to be used in the New World.¹⁵

One great strength of this identification is the Ammonites' powerful concerns about stained swords. [Alma 24:12-15 LDS] (Alma 14:34-40 RLDS) While this staining could simply be an idiom or figure of speech, wooden weapons literally absorb blood and become permanently stained

unlike metal weapons, which can be easily wiped clean.¹⁶ At the same time, obsidian blades could give Book of Mormon swords the shiny brightness they are described as having.¹⁷

Certainly, the Book of Mormon asserts that some metal swords were used. However, only a small fraction of Book of Mormon swords are specifically said to be made of metal.¹⁸ The sword of Laban is explicitly said to be steel, which is archaeologically attested in the ancient Near East in Nephi's era.¹⁹ The only other explicitly metal swords in the Book of Mormon are the steel swords made by Shule a few generations after the Jaredite migration from Mesopotamia to the New World. The early Jaredites were familiar with metal working, but it is not stated how many steel swords Shule (a great-grandson of Jared) made and whether they were an early anomaly or somehow remained the norm in Jaredite culture.²⁰

Other passages hint at the possibility of other metal swords as well: for example, Nephi said that he made swords after the manner of Laban's sword, weapon making is mentioned in conjunction with metallurgy several times, and Jaredite weapons whose blades were **cankered with rust** were discovered.²¹ Yet these statements can be interpreted in different ways. Nephi's swords may have been stylistically modeled on Laban's swords without being made of the same material. The mention of metallurgy and weaponry together only occurs a few times and could represent a limited and elite



Battle in the Sidon-Used with permission by James H. Fullmer

industry.²² Similarly, the discovery of Jaredite metal weaponry and armor was probably noted precisely because it was so rare. The difference in archaeological evidence between dozens of metal swords and several million metal swords would be astronomical and could help explain why metal swords have not yet been discovered in ancient America.²³

Many of the Book of Mormon weapons, including swords, daggers, and axes are also mentioned in the King James Version of the Old Testament. In the Old World, these weapons were indeed made with metal in many cases.²⁴ However, we need not assume that Lehiters or Jaredites



continued to use Old World weaponry throughout their separate existences—these groups would likely have adapted to their new environments rapidly. John L. Sorenson asserts, “Their eventual encounters with warfare likely involved largely experimental or borrowed measures in the new land since the record lacks any indication that the immigrant generation brought firsthand knowledge of warfare with them.”²⁵

It is also likely that the English weaponry words used in the Book of Mormon translation are linguistic approximations since modern English-speaking people had no similar weaponry to the Nephites. The functions of Nephite weapons, however, were probably similar to what English speakers would call swords, though their shape and composition could have varied quite widely.

Even modern definitions of swords vary, with some emphasizing the function, some the shape, and others the composition.²⁶ One study of the worldwide history of swords uses the broad term **hilted cutting weapon** and notes that **the nomenclature of ancient weapons is a controversial area.**²⁷

Three points can be raised in light of this information. First, if it is indeed the case that the Ammonites were using razor-sharp, flint-studded wooden weapons, then the symbolism of these weapons representing the Ammonites’ complete forgiveness becomes all the more vivid because of the permanence of bloodstains indelibly left on wooden weapons.²⁸ Scripture teaches that Jesus is the only means through which our sins may be forgiven, and so the imagery of Jesus removing permanent stains is beautiful and powerful. The Ammonites, former killers and murderers, proved to be some of the most penitent and zealous believers.²⁹ Like them, if we will bury the swords of our spiritual rebellion or outright transgressions, we can know that our words and deeds, our swords and souls, can be found spotless and bright at the last day.

Second, some readers of the Book of Mormon or Bible may be discouraged when unambiguous evidence has not yet surfaced for an aspect of Book of Mormon or biblical archaeology, but it is important to remember that true faith is not based upon material evidences. Neal A. Maxwell said, “All the scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, will remain in the realm of faith. Science will not be able to prove or disprove holy writ. However, enough plausible evidence will come forth to prevent scoffers from having a field day, but not enough to remove the requirement of faith. Believers must be patient during such unfolding.”³⁰

The search for metal swords in the New World presents just that sort of opportunity to exercise faith. Absence of evidence is not unconditional evidence of absence, and archaeological discoveries that overturn previous anthropological paradigms occur regularly. If we are willing to allow that most Book of Mormon swords may have resembled hilted, bladed weapons from pre-Columbian America, the difficulties disappear considerably. Many difficulties for modern readers may result from forcing available evidence to fit preconceived notions instead of allowing scripture and available evidence to speak for themselves.

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Further Reading

Matthew Roper, “Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms, Part 2: Ancient Warfare,” (forthcoming).

William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS]; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990), 329–351.

Matthew Roper, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): 34–43, 77–78.

John L. Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship), 410–413.

John L. Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 130–132.

1. William J. Hamblin and A. Brent Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS]; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990), 332.

2. Matthew Roper, “Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms, Part 2: Ancient Warfare,” (forthcoming); Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (1993): 161.

3. Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 329–351; John L. Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship), 410–414; Matthew Roper, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): 34–43, 77–78; Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Pre-Columbian Swords,” Evidence #0195, May 25, 2021; Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Swords in Book of Mormon Times,” Evidence #0194, May 25, 2021; Roper, “Ancient Warfare.”

4. Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 411; Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 338–347. The Maya called the macuahuitl a hatzab, perhaps connected to the Hebrew *hsb*, meaning “to hew.” Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 411; Roper, “Ancient Warfare.”

5. Matthew Roper, “Eyewitness Descriptions of Mesoamerican Swords,” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 169–176; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 410; Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 82–83.

6. Michael D. Coe, “Pre-Conquest America,” in *Swords and*

Hilt Weapons (New York, NY: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989), 222.

7. Evidence Central, “Swords in Book of Mormon Times”; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 415; Coe, “Pre-Conquest America,” 220.

8. The most developed American cultures lived in tropical and subtropical climates, which accelerate deterioration of archaeological remains. Marco Antonio Cervera Obregon, “The Macuahuitl: An Innovative Weapon of the Late Post-Classic in Mesoamerica,” *Arms and Armour* 3, no. 2 (2006): 133, 137, says, “The fact that this weapon does not appear in any archaeological records so far recovered, in a good part of Mesoamerica before the Post-Classic, does not mean that it has not been used or at least not on such a grand scale as the lance or the átlatl were. . . . We know more about this Mexica weapon from written sources than from archaeology itself.” A recent study of stone shards postulates that many of the shards were used for macanas. Prudence M. Rice, “Macanas in the Postclassic Maya Lowlands? A Preliminary Look,” *Lithic Technology* 47, no. 4 (2022): 314–327.

9. James White, “Of Cities and Swords,” *Christian Research Journal* 19, no. 1 (1996): 35. There is admittedly some variation among scholars in the classification of the macuahuitl: Ross Hassig calls them swords, Michael Coe calls them sword-clubs, and Marco Antonio Cervera Obregon insists that they are unique from both swords and clubs. For variations in the definition of sword, see note 27. Coe, “Pre-Conquest America,” 220–222; Hassig, *Aztec Warfare*, 45; Obregon, “Macuahuitl,” 128.

10. Francisco López de Gómara, *The Conquest of the West India* (n.p.: Readex Microprint, 1966), 186; Antonio de Herrera, *The General History of the Vast Continent and Islands of America* [. . .], 4 vols. (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1973), 2:352.

11. For a Spanish source describing decapitation by a macuahuitl, see Fray Diego Duran, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans. Doris Heyden (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 258; López de Gómara, *Conquest of the West India*, 187.

12. The multiplicity of terms suggests that the weapons differ somewhat, though perhaps they overlap to a degree in function or form. A scimitar slashes and cuts, a dagger stabs and thrusts, an axe and warclub can chop, hack, and hew, but a sword can do all of these. A small dagger could also simply be fashioned from an obsidian shard. See Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Cimeters,” Evidence #0097, September 19, 2020; Book of Mormon Central, “Why Does the Book of Mormon Mention Cimeters? (Mosiah 9:16),” *KnoWhy* 472 (October 2, 2018). Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Axes,” Evidence #0170, March 22, 2021. For projectile weaponry, see Book of Mormon Central, “What Does Archaeology Reveal about Warfare during Early Nephite Times? (Jarom 1:7–8),” *KnoWhy* 328 (June 19, 2017); Roper, “Ancient Warfare.”

13. For a discussion of wood-bladed swords, see Roper, “Ancient Warfare”; Coe, “Pre-Conquest America,” 218; Bernabe Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, trans. Roland Hamilton (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), 218; Steven A. LeBlanc, *Prehistoric Warfare in the American*

Southwest (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1999), 97–98, 104–106; David H. Dye, “The Transformation of Mississippian Warfare: Four Case Studies from the Mid-South,” *The Archaeology of Warfare: Prehistories of Raiding and Conquest*, ed. Elizabeth N. Arkush and Mark W. Allen (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006), 131.

14. The Loltun Cave macana has a pointed tip, which could help explain the sword tip mentioned in Alma 44:13. See Roper, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” 40–41; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 411–412; Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 337–339, 341.

15. Roper, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” 39–41; Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 337–338, 343–344.

16. Roper, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” 39; Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 342–343; Book of Mormon Central, “What Is the Symbolism of the Stained Swords of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies? (Alma 24:12),” *KnoWhy* 132 (June 29, 2016). Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 412–413.

17. Alma 24:12–13, 15–16; Matthew Roper, “On Cynics and Swords,” *FARMS Review of Books* 9, no. 1 (1997): 152.

18. Jerry D. Grover Jr., *The Swords of Shule: Jaredite Land Northward Chronology, Geography, and Culture in Mesoamerica* (Provo, UT: Challex Scientific, 2018), 267–281; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 331–344.

19. Book of Mormon Central, “What Was the Sword of Laban Like? (1 Nephi 4:9),” *KnoWhy* 401 (January 23, 2018).

20. Ether 3:1, 3; 7:9. The use of steel in the Book of Mormon has especially turned heads, as the term now commonly refers to carburized iron technology; however, the term originally meant simply to make something hard, and the word is used in the Old Testament as a mistranslation for bronze. Book of Mormon Central, “Why Did Nephi’s ‘Fine Steel’ Bow Break? (1 Nephi 16:18),” *KnoWhy* 548 (January 31, 2020); Grover, *Swords of Shule*, 267–281. Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 347, suggest that Shule’s steel swords could have been a translational anachronism made by Mosiah or Moroni, who would have been familiar with Laban’s steel sword.

21. 2 Nephi 5:14; Jarom 1:8; Mosiah 8:10–11.

22. Steel is mentioned in conjunction with weaponry only in Jarom 1:8. Metalworking with other metals is also mentioned alongside weapon making in 2 Nephi 5:14–15 and Ether 10:23–27, though perhaps coincidentally because these passages mention general industries of the people.

23. Despite a lack of evidence for metal swords in Book of Mormon times, arguments have been made that Mesoamerican metallurgy began much earlier than the current consensus or that South American metallurgy was imported. Metal was certainly used in ancient Mesoamerica, at least on a limited basis and for decorative purposes. Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Decorative Iron,” Evidence #0356, July 11, 2022; Evidence Central,

“Book of Mormon Evidence: Olmec Iron,” Evidence #0035, September 19, 2020; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 328–344; Matthew Roper, “Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms, Part 3: Metals,” (forthcoming).

24. The Hebrew word hereb is most commonly translated “sword,” but also it is also rendered “dagger” in Judges 3:16, 21–22. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Mervyn E. J. Richardson, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001), s.v. “חֶרֶב.” This source will hereafter be referred to as HALOT. Several Hebrew words are translated as “axe,” referring both to weapons (battle axe, mace, or warclub) and to various chopping and hewing tools (adze, pickaxe); HALOT, s.v. “חַפֵּי” “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב.” “Club” is not used in the King James Version, though “rod” and “staff” (Hebrew shebet and matteh) are sometimes mentioned as weapons. Hebrew shebet and matteh and a few other words are translated as “club” in other Bible versions. See HALOT, s.v. “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב” “חֶרֶב.” “Cimeter” is not used in the King James Version, though one of Goliath’s weapons in 1 Samuel 17:6, 45 was probably a scimitar. Evidence Central, “Cimeters”; Book of Mormon Central, “Why Does the Book of Mormon Mention Cimeters?”; Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Scimitars, Cimeters! We have Scimitars! Do We Need Another Cimeter?,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 352–359; HALOT, s.v. “חֶרֶב.”

25. Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 34; John L. Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 130–132.

26. Definitions of sword vary in strictness and can focus on shape, material, or function. Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines it loosely based on its function as “an offensive weapon worn at the side, and used by hand either for thrusting or cutting.” The Oxford English Dictionary adds a description of shape, and popular understanding usually includes a metal composition. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, NY: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. “sword;” Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “sword,” https://oed.com/dictionary/sword_n?tab=meaning_and_use#19303158.

27. Victor Harris, introduction to *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, comp. Michael D. Coe et al. (New York, NY: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989), 6; Anthony Harding, “Stone, Bronze, and Iron,” in *Swords and Hilt Weapons*, 8.

28. Roper, “Swords and Cimeters in the Book of Mormon,” 39; Hamblin and Merrill, “Swords in the Book of Mormon,” 342–343; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 412–413; Book of Mormon Central, “What Is the Symbolism of the Stained Swords of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies?”

29. For a discussion of whether the Ammonites were pacifists, see Book of Mormon Central, “Why Did the Ammonites Covenant Not to Take Up Arms? (Alma 24:15),” *KnoWhy* 567 (June 30, 2020).

30. Neal A. Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1983), 4; Matthew Roper, “Anachronisms: Accidental Evidence in Book of Mormon Criticisms, Introduction,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* (forthcoming).

BMF Interns 2024



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PROPHECY WATCH

There is a prophecy manifesting itself today concerning God's covenants to His people. It's a good reminder for our response to the war in the Middle East right now and helps us see God's plan through the eyes of the scriptures. The prophecy simply describes God's response to the nations of the earth in relation to how they treat His covenant people. A recent article by Hal Lindsey entitled *The Plan All Along* speaks clearly concerning this prophecy and the modern nation of Israel:

The new American policy toward Israel has already begun to manifest itself. The recent declassification of U.S. documents pertaining to Israel's top-secret nuclear arms program makes a good case in point. What kind of nation tells the world its ally's most important secrets?

On CBS's *Face the Nation*, Peggy Noonan expressed the opinion of most observers when she said, "I think U.S.-Israeli relations right now are in the worst shape I have ever seen them in — the worst shape they have been in since 1948 when America was instrumental in inventing Israel."

That's an interesting phrase — "instrumental in inventing Israel." It's hard to fathom how a 239-year-old nation could possibly have "invented" a nation that came into existence over three thousand years ago. Of course, she means the modern State of Israel, but it's still not in any way an American "invention."

Israel is God's invention. He created it. He made certain promises to it and about it. No matter what the United States does, God Himself will take care of Israel. While the Bible tells about some terrible times in store for that small nation, it will endure.

And God will deal with nations according to their dealings with Israel. In Genesis 12:3, He said to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse." [NASB]

Anyone who thinks that verse refers only to Abraham as an individual and not to the Children of Israel, should look at Numbers 24:9. There the promise is repeated as an oracle from the Lord, but this time specifically to the nation of Israel. "Blessed is everyone who blesses you, And cursed is everyone who curses you." [NASB]

We see the pattern hold true throughout the Old Testament. Even those nations used by God to punish Israel when it strayed, were themselves punished when they treated Israel poorly. Babylon is a perfect example.

In 1948, the United States, led by President Harry Truman, became the first nation to officially recognize Israel. He did so only eleven minutes after their Declaration of Independence became official.

Warren Austin, the U.S. representative to the United Nations, was so outraged by Truman's decision that he left and went home. According to the Truman Library, Secretary of State Marshall had to send "a State Department official to the United Nations to prevent the entire United States delegation from resigning." Marshall did this despite the fact that he and most of the rest of the U.S. foreign policy team had also opposed Truman on the issue.

What followed for the United States was an era of growth and prosperity unlike anything in the history of the world. From that time through 1973, the U.S. economy grew by almost 4% a year. Household income grew an astronomical 74%. Compare that to the last few years when we've seen household income actually fall.

When God said He would bless those who bless Israel, He meant it. In the United States, we've seen it with our own eyes. But if He meant one side of the equation, He meant the other side as well. He will curse those who curse Israel, just as we see happening before our eyes to the United States.¹

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PROPHECY WATCH

Does this same covenant apply to the New Jerusalem and the people of this land? Will the nations of the earth, especially America, be held accountable for their relationship with the Zion of the Americas? As Book of Mormon believers, we are blessed to have restored scripture to help us understand the answer to this question. The answer is yes! We find these scriptures in the Book of Mormon describing all those who fight against Zion in the last days, in both the new world and the old world. Those who might fight against Zion may also include the people of the Restoration. Are you fighting against Zion in some way? Think and pray seriously about it and ask the Lord for clear understanding.

And all that fight against Zion, shall be destroyed. (1 Nephi 7:30)

For the time surely must come, that all they who fight against Zion, shall be cut off. (1 Nephi 7:42)

Wherefore, they that fight against Zion and the covenant people of the Lord, shall lick up the dust of their feet; (2 Nephi 5:33)

And all the nations that fight against Zion, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision; (2 Nephi 11:118)

These are such amazing times in which we live. The latter-day signs are being fulfilled more fully and coming together in a convergence of many signs and wonders. Just as Jesus and the prophets told us. The Lord is speaking through His word and giving revelation to those who will hear. The signs of the times are among us! Watch, therefore, and pray always!

¹ The Plan All Along Hal Lindsay
<http://hallindsay.com/ww-3-29-2015/>

The purpose of Prophecy Watch is to assist in looking for and knowing the signs of the times and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. The perspectives it contains are not presented as the “only, best or final answer” to their meaning but rather “to the intent that ye might believe on his name” and more fully participate in their fulfillment. We hope Prophecy Watch will provide a brief glimpse into specific prophetic subjects that will encourage each person to diligently pray, study, fast and seek the will of God concerning them.