

## Swords and Spears

For over a decade I've been hung up on the dearth of physical evidence, particularly Iron Age artifacts, supporting the *Book of Mormon*. Recently I had a mini-enlightenment in this regard: swords and spears do not grow on trees; they do not fall as manna from Heaven. They are *made*, by men.

Without pretending to know more than I do about mining and metallurgy, as I understand, iron implements are the product of a complex, labor-intensive process. Their genesis lies in rock, *hard rock*, hematite, magnetite, picked, hacked, gouged, blasted from the earth. Now, picture Pittsburg or Gary, Indiana. Even at one-tenth scale it's a big deal. Crushed iron ore is dumped into a furnace. At roughly 2282° Fahrenheit iron melts. The dross or slag is skimmed off and molten iron poured into molds or ingots. Removed from a mold, I presume spear points or arrow heads would be cleaned up, sharpened, and fitted to a wooden shaft. Swords might be formed in molds or wrought from ingots, repeatedly reheated, annealed, polished, sharpened, and fitted with an iron, wood, or bone handle.

Over five centuries from the Rockies to the Appalachians, virtually every square meter of earth has been denuded, tilled, plowed, planted, and harvested hundreds of times over. And not just the Midwest, Pacific to Atlantic, the Gulf to the Arctic, land has been drilled down, dug up, built on, and paved over. While five hundred years of exploration and exploitation have overrun museums and warehouses with millenniums-old Stone Age artifacts, *not one* from the Iron Age-Copper or Bronze Age for that matter-has turned up. Where are the mines, the mills, the furnaces, the slag heaps? Where are the foundries, the blacksmith shops, the forges, anvils, hammers, and tongs?

Among its myriad uses, the value of metal to an army can't be overstated. In "Heleman Leads an Army of 2060 Ammonite Youth" artist Arnold Friberg makes this apparent. At the painting's center, amid a forest of *metal*-tipped spears pointed skyward from the grip of 2060 "stripling" warriors, commander Heleman, in polished *metal* helmet and full war regalia, sits astride a steed-In America before Columbus?-with a Spartan-like, polished-*metal*, head-piece.

With admiration for Mr. Friberg's skill and appreciation for artistic license, this work points to the *immensity* and *complexity* of equipping even one army: spears, swords, daggers, shields, headgear, clothing, shoes, boots by the thousand. Not to mention logistical support: workers, wagons, tents, bedding! Imagine feeding this gang three squares a day! What became of it: swords, spears, armor, all the support equipment? After the battle, what of the corpses? The skeletons?

The *Book of Mormon* mentions "sword" 157 times; "brass," "iron," "copper," even "*steel*" 68 times. But *no* metal implement-of war or otherwise-predating Columbus has ever been found in the Americas, *not so much as one rusty pin!*

Regarding the *Book of Mormon*, I'm compelled to look at the facts, the evidence-or absence thereof.