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Review of Michaela Stephens, *To Defend Them By Stratagem: Fortify Yourself with Book of Mormon War Tactics* (Gilbert, AZ: Lion's Whelp Publications, 2018). 246 pp. \$12.99 (paperback).

Abstract: *Sometimes it is easy to overlook, disregard, or discount the “war chapters” in the Book of Mormon. Michaela Stephens’ new book about these chapters deserves wider attention, as it is an excellent study resource that provides valuable devotional and academic insights while remaining accessible to lay readers.*

The burgeoning study of warfare in the Book of Mormon remains relatively unexplored. A few authors like John Bytheway have authored relevant books, and the war stories occasionally make it into talks. Micheala Stephens’ new book, *To Defend Them by Stratagem*, offers a shining example of a devotional discussion of warfare in the Book of Mormon with insightful analysis and plain language accessible to readers.

Stephens sprinkles perceptive points and “aha moments” early and throughout the book. In assessing King Noah’s behaviors, she notes how he became unable to distinguish between real and fake threats, and his attempts to stop them invited Lamanite reaction. She makes the case that Noah’s response to Alma’s new church was probably a violent sweep of friends and relatives of the believers, and perhaps even of Lamanite lands.

Thus, we can see how King Noah lost the ability to discern what was really threatening and what was harmless, and real dangers began to blind-side him. Imagine his fear when confronted with Gideon, sword in hand, and then seeing the army of the Lamanites invading — threats coming from all directions. And then his people turn on him after running

away from the Lamanites. He never saw any of that coming because he was so fixated on Alma (17)

The book covers the war chapters in particular but provides insights from King Benjamin to the Jaredites. The chapters vary in length, but they stood out for being pithy and easily digestible. This doesn't take away from the astute ideas Stephens provides. For example, she compared the wrathful oaths of Gideon in Mosiah 19 to the revenging oath of the Nephites in Mormon 3. This made me reconsider some of my own research. In other places, such as her educated guesses about Captain Moroni's backstory (Chapter 10, 35–39), her insights inspired me to further research.

While the book is academically insightful, its best features are devotional. The book's chapters are divided in such a way that families would be easily able to add this to their home studies curriculum. Stephens makes a good case that the 19 war chapters receive 90 minutes every four years to study 52 pages — and that was before the introduction of the two-hour block! The author's analysis isn't overly long or complex, and quotes could be included in Sunday school without anybody noticing. The author lists and quotes key scriptures in her analysis, which warmly invites further study from readers.

Stephens promises, "In this book, you will learn about tactics that Satan uses against us. You will learn about tactics you can use to defend yourself. You also will learn strategies that will allow you to go on the offensive." The book admirably achieves this goal to create a very enjoyable read that is nourishing and accessible for both the mind and the soul.

Morgan Deane has a BA from Southern Virginia University and an MA in History from Norwich University specializing in military history. His publications include *Offensive Warfare in The Book of Mormon* and *a Defense of the Bush Doctrine and Bleached Bones and Wicked Serpents: Ancient Warfare in the Book of Mormon*. He teaches history at Brigham Young University-Idaho and has been accepted into the War Studies Program at Kings College London, where he will study the early insurgency of Mao Zedong.