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Was Steel Known When Lehi Left Jerusalem?

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Abstract: This article argues that steel existed around the time Lehi left Jerusalem, about 600 B.C.

Profession vs. Possession

To possess religion, not merely to profess it, was the challenge by Brigham Young to the first Pioneer party in May one hundred years ago. Under a cloudy sky, on a wet, cold morning, in the Scottsbluff Country, now Nebraska, he restated the eternal doctrine that knowledge alone does not save; only when used in God's service does it flame high to illumine the way to happiness here and hereafter.

Thenceforth, after this memorable address, with lives more nearly conforming to God's law, swollen rivers were crossed and wagons dragged up steep mountainsides, with new courage. The drudgery of the trek, its toil and hardships, were forgotten in the faith that they, the Pioneers, as masters of their appetites, were working out, however dimly, the purposes of Almighty God.

With new eyes they saw that they were to wrest an empire from the desert first for the glory of God, then, last and least, for their own temporal good. In the vision of their coming pioneer homes they saw arising mighty temples of the Lord. They learned to understand that only a clean, obedient people could make such a vision come true. As they grew in mastery of self, dread and fear vanished; hope and trust made every task an easy one. Every day became covered with splendor.

President Young's message is as much for us of today as it was for those of the past. We have work to do in taming the present deserts of unbelief and sordid lives; and it must be done in simple acceptance of God's commands, in the spirit of partnership with God.

The chasm between profession and possession is as wide as eternity. Blessed is he who really possesses by daily use of them, the truths that make up our religion.—J.A.W.

Inspired Following

To Latter-day Saints the question of leadership has always been of utmost importance. Our Church has been especially fortunate to have men at its head who have been blessed with unusual leadership. Our Presidents, from the time of the restoration of the gospel to the present, have been men who not only possessed innate powers that made it easy for them to attract people to them, but they also received inspiration that intensified their inherent qualities.

The concern of Latter-day Saints must be our own ability to follow the paths indicated by our leaders. Sometimes our leaders indicate that the ways we go are not good ways. At such times there is temptation to think that we know more

than the leader who has been placed over us. We see his shortcomings, his foibles, and we tend to discount the good qualities that have recommended him to the position for which he has been set apart, an indication that the Lord has been sought to give him a special blessing.

As followers of these inspired leaders we should ask for additional wisdom that we may be inspired followers. The ultimate success of leadership depends on the nature of the people led. For all of us who live faithfully, there is at once opportunity to be both followers and leaders in the Church, for each must follow in some respects and lead in others. Unfortunately, we do not always realize that to develop the characteristics of intelligent leadership, we must cultivate equally well the ability to follow.

We pray—and rightly—for the Lord to bless our leaders. We should likewise pray that when this heightened vision has been imparted to them, we as followers may be given the wisdom and the good judgment and the desire to follow in the path which they indicate.

While the great need of the Church is good leaders, we might do well to pray that we may also be good followers.—M. C. J.

Was Steel Known When Lehi Left Jerusalem?

THE Book of Mormon states that the blade of Laban's sword was of "the most precious steel." (1 Nephi 4:9.) Anti-Mormon writers have objected that steel was not known at that time, about 600 B.C.

This is historically incorrect. The use of iron by the human race goes back thousands of years. The qualities of iron, and therefore the uses to which it can be put, are largely determined by its content of carbon. Wrought iron contains less than three-tenths of one percent of carbon; steel contains as high as two and one-fourth percent of carbon; and cast iron contains as high as five percent of carbon. In modern iron furnaces, the quantity of carbon is controlled, so that wrought iron, steel, or cast iron may be produced at will. The crude methods of iron extraction in early days, often in open fires, offered no such control. Yet, it cannot be doubted that steel was often formed, and became recognized. It is certain that much of the earliest iron was steel. Homer, the poet, writing in the ninth century before Christ, made use of a simile, in one of his best-known passages, drawn from the method of hardening steel. The *National Geographic Magazine* for February 1944, describes King Solomon's smelting works, for iron and other metals, B. C.

The translators of King James Bible found it necessary to use the word "steel" in making clear the meaning of the Old Testament writers, and the word occurs several times in periods long before the migration of Lehi.—J. A. W.