

Judges 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

Analysis

And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

This verse describes the raiders' calculated timing—"when Israel had sown" (im-zara Yisrael, אִם־זָרָעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל) indicates they attacked at harvest, maximizing economic devastation. The verb zara (זרע, 'to sow, scatter seed') appears throughout Scripture in agricultural and metaphorical contexts—sowing seed, sowing righteousness (Hosea 10:12), sowing to flesh versus Spirit (Galatians 6:7-8). Here, Israel's sowing produced not harvest but enemy invasion—agricultural labor became futile exercise.

The coalition of 'Midianites... Amalekites... children of the east' represents combined desert peoples. Amalekites were ancient Israelite enemies (Exodus 17:8-16, Deuteronomy 25:17-19, 1 Samuel 15). 'Children of the east' (benei-qedem, בְּנֵי־קָדֵם) generically designates various Arabian and Transjordanian peoples. This alliance's size and coordination increased threat level—multiple groups cooperating in systematic economic warfare. The phrase 'even they came up against them' emphasizes hostile intent and sustained attacks, not isolated raids but coordinated campaigns.

Theologically, this illustrates how sin creates vulnerability to multiple enemies. When Israel walked in covenant faithfulness, enemies couldn't coordinate against

them—God prevented such alliances (Exodus 23:27-28, Deuteronomy 28:7). But covenant unfaithfulness removed divine protection, enabling enemy cooperation. Similarly, Christians maintaining spiritual vigilance find Satan's attacks fragmented and unsuccessful (Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Peter 5:8-9). But spiritual compromise creates vulnerability—multiple temptations and attacks coordinate against weakened believers, overwhelming defenses. This emphasizes need for comprehensive obedience, not selective faithfulness.

Historical Context

Harvest-time raids were devastating economic warfare strategy. Ancient agriculture required year-round labor—plowing, planting, watering, weeding, protecting from animals—with harvest representing concentrated value. Grain, grapes, olives took months of cultivation, with harvest periods lasting weeks. Destroying crops at harvest devastated entire year's labor and food supply for coming year, creating famine and economic collapse.

Desert peoples' mobility via camels enabled hit-and-run tactics settled agriculturalists couldn't counter. Raiders appeared suddenly, plundered harvests and livestock, disappeared into desert before organized defense mobilized. Israelite infantry couldn't pursue—chasing nomads into desert meant abandoning farms and families. This asymmetric warfare favored mobile raiders over settled farmers, explaining seven years of successful raids.

The coalition pattern—Midianites, Amalekites, children of the east—reflects political-military alliances common in ancient Near East. Smaller groups often confederated against larger threats. Egyptian, Hittite, and Assyrian records document various tribal coalitions. These alliances were typically temporary, formed for specific campaigns, then dissolving when immediate objective achieved or leadership changed. However, seven-year duration suggests sustained cooperation, possibly cemented through intermarriage, trade relationships, or shared religious practices.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'sowings' (investments, efforts, labor) in your life have been devastated by enemy attack resulting from spiritual vulnerability?
2. How does enemy coalition against Israel picture Satan's strategy of coordinating multiple attacks against spiritually weakened believers?
3. What spiritual disciplines and practices maintain the 'hedge of protection' preventing enemy coordination against you?

Interlinear Text

מַדִּין | מִשְׁרָאָל יְהֻעָם אֶת־הַיּוֹם
H1961 H518 had sown And so it was when Israel came up that the Midianites
H2232 H3478 H5927 H4080

וְעַמֶּל קָרְבָּן	וְבָנִי יִצְחָק	וְבָנִי יִצְחָק	וְבָנִי יִצְחָק	וְבָנִי יִצְחָק
and the Amalekites	and the children	of the east	came up	H5921

Additional Cross-References

Judges 3:13 (References Israel): And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

Judges 7:12 (Parallel theme): And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

Judges 6:33 (Parallel theme): Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.

Job 1:3 (Parallel theme): His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Genesis 29:1 (Parallel theme): Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

1 Kings 4:30 (Parallel theme): And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

Judges 8:10 (Parallel theme): Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.