

# Judges 6:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

## Analysis

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**For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.**

This verse emphasizes the raiders' overwhelming numbers and mobility. Coming 'with their cattle and their tents' indicates these weren't mere military raids but mobile populations—families, herds, and portable dwellings enabling extended operations. The comparison 'as grasshoppers for multitude' (ki-arbeh larov, פִּיאָרְבָּה לָרֹב, 'like locust for abundance') evokes devastating locust swarms that strip landscapes bare—fitting metaphor for agricultural devastation. The phrase 'without number' (ve'ein mispar, וְאֵין מִסְפָּר, 'and no number') emphasizes incalculable multitude.

The mention of camels marks revolutionary military development. Camels, domesticated around 2000 BCE in Arabia, weren't widely used militarily until around 1200-1000 BCE. Their ability to travel long distances without water, carry heavy loads, and move quickly made them ideal for desert raiding. This is Scripture's first mention of camels in military context (earlier references are patriarchal narratives, caravan trade). The Midianites' camel cavalry gave them strategic mobility Israel couldn't counter with infantry or even chariot forces unable to pursue into desert regions.

Theologically, the locust imagery connects to broader biblical symbolism. Locusts represent divine judgment (Exodus 10:4-15, Joel 1-2, Revelation 9:3-11)—natural disaster manifesting covenant curse. Yet locusts also picture restoration—"I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2:25). The Midianite plague, while judgment, pointed toward eventual deliverance. This illustrates how God's discipline, though painful, serves redemptive purposes—driving His people to repentance and dependence on Him rather than self-sufficiency.

## Historical Context

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The camel's military use revolutionized ancient Near Eastern warfare. Before camels, desert regions served as barriers limiting military operations. Armies required water sources every 15-20 miles, restricting campaigns to regions with reliable wells or rivers. Camels could travel 100+ miles without water, enabling rapid strikes from desert bases inaccessible to conventional forces. This explains Midianites' tactical advantage—they could strike from Sinai or Arabian deserts, raid Israelite territory, and retreat beyond pursuit range.

Archaeological evidence confirms increased camel use during late 2nd millennium BCE. Earlier skepticism about patriarchal-era camel references (claiming anachronism) has been challenged by discoveries of camel bones and figurines from Middle Bronze Age contexts. However, widespread military camel use clearly emerged during Iron Age I (1200-1000 BCE), exactly when Judges places Midianite raids. This historical accuracy supports the text's reliability.

The Midianites' tent-dwelling lifestyle contrasted with Israelite agricultural settlements. Midianites were semi-nomadic pastoralists, herding sheep, goats, and camels across desert regions. Their mobile lifestyle enabled the raiding pattern described—entire tribal groups moving seasonally to exploit Israelite agriculture. This economic asymmetry made defending against raids difficult—Israelites couldn't abandon farms to pursue raiders into deserts, while Midianites had no fixed installations Israel could counterattack.

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

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1. What 'locust swarms' (overwhelming circumstances) in your life expose dependence on God rather than self-sufficiency?
2. How does recognizing difficult circumstances as divine discipline affect your response to trials?
3. In what ways has God 'restored the years the locust ate' after seasons of discipline and repentance?

## Interlinear Text

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וְכִי	H3588	מִקְנֵה	H1992	וְמִקְנֵה	H4735	מִלְאָכִים	H5927	מִלְאָכִים	H168	וְאֶלְיָהוּ	H935	וְאֶלְיָהוּ	H369
as	H1767	grasshoppers	H697	for multitude	H7230	for both they and their camels	H1992	for both they and their camels	H1581				
were without number	H4557	and they came	H935	and they came	H776	into the land	H776	into the land	H7843	to destroy	H7843	to destroy	H7843

## Additional Cross-References

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**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 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.

**Isaiah 13:20** (Parallel theme): It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

**Isaiah 60:6** (Parallel theme): The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

**Jeremiah 49:29** (Parallel theme): Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side.

**Jeremiah 49:32** (Parallel theme): And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD.

**Jeremiah 46:23** (Parallel theme): They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable.