

# Judges 8:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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.**

This verse provides crucial military context for Gideon's pursuit. The location **Karkor** (Qarqor, קַרְקָר) is uncertain—possibly in the Syrian desert east of the Jordan, a remote refuge where the Midianite kings regrouped. That **fifteen thousand men** (chamisha-asar elef ish, אַלְפַּת חֲמִשָּׁה-עָשָׂר אִישׁ) remained demonstrates the magnitude of God's prior victory. The original force comprised 135,000 warriors (15,000 remaining plus 120,000 casualties equals 135,000 total). Gideon's 300 had routed an army 450 times their size.

The phrase **all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east** (kol-hannotarim mikkol-machaneh benei-qedem, כָּל-הַנוֹּתָרִים מִכָּל-מַחְאֵן בְּנֵי-קְדֵם) identifies the enemy coalition. The "children of the east" (benei-qedem, בְּנֵי-קְדֵם) encompassed Midianites, Amalekites, and other nomadic peoples (Judges 6:3, 33) who periodically raided Israel's harvests. The number **an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword** (me'ah ve-esrim elef ish sholeif cherev, מֵאָה וְעָשָׂר אַלְפַּת שְׁלֹשֶׁת חֲרֵב) specifies trained warriors (sholeif cherev, "drawing sword"), not including camp followers.

These numbers vindicate God's strategy of reducing Israel's army to 300. Had 32,000 Israelites defeated 135,000 Midianites, they might claim partial credit. But 300 against 135,000 leaves no doubt—this victory was entirely divine. The staggering casualty ratio (400:1) demonstrates supernatural intervention. This foreshadows Christ's victory where one Man defeated all the powers of darkness: "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:15).

## Historical Context

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The "children of the east" were Bedouin-style nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples inhabiting regions east and southeast of Canaan—the Syrian desert, Arabian desert, and Transjordan wilderness. These groups practiced camel-based pastoralism and raiding, giving them high mobility. The introduction of domesticated camels for military purposes (Judges 6:5 mentions "camels without number") revolutionized desert warfare, allowing rapid strikes deep into settled territory followed by quick withdrawal into desert refuges.

The number 120,000 casualties is extraordinary but not unprecedented in ancient warfare. The Assyrian king Shalmaneser III claimed to have killed 14,000 enemies at Qarqar (853 BCE); Ramesses II claimed tens of thousands killed at Kadesh. While ancient Near Eastern battle accounts often inflated numbers, the biblical account emphasizes divine intervention making the victory possible. Archaeological evidence confirms violent destructions at numerous sites during the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition, though connecting specific destructions to particular biblical battles remains challenging.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## 1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

### Study Questions

1. How does the 300 versus 135,000 ratio encourage believers facing overwhelming spiritual opposition or life circumstances?
2. What does God's insistence on reducing Israel's army teach about the danger of attributing divine victories to human strength or wisdom?
3. How should Christians respond when God's methods seem to make success less likely from human perspective?

### Interlinear Text

Now Zebah	and Zalmunna	were in Karkor	and their hosts	עָם
H2078	H6759	H7174	H4264	H5973
with them about fifteen		כֹּתֶם שָׁת	אֶל עָשָׂר	מִכֶּל
H2568	H6240	H505	H3605	H3605
and their hosts	of the children	בְּנֵי	קָדָם	מִצְרָיִם
H4264	H1121	H6924	H5307	H3967
thousand	men	that drew	שָׁלַף	וְעִשְׂרֵה יָמִים
H505	H376	H8025	H2719	H6242

### Additional Cross-References

**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.

**2 Kings 3:26** (Word): And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

**Judges 20:15** (Word): And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, beside the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

**Judges 20:2** (Word): And the chief of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.

**Judges 20:17** (Word): And the men of Israel, beside Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these were men of war.

**Judges 20:46** (Word): So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these were men of valour.

**Judges 20:35** (Word): And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword.

**Judges 20:25** (Word): And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.