

# Illustrated Bible Life

## Beetle Invasion!

**H**ave you ever seen a Japanese beetle? They are beautiful little bugs—glossy black with iridescent coppery wings and a deep emerald sheen to their heads. Yet that lovely appearance hides an insidious voraciousness unlike anything I've had to deal with in the bug kingdom!

These pretty little beetles arrived by the dozens this past summer to my patio garden. They immediately swarmed my rosebushes and ate every petal of every flower, and then started in on the leaves! Before I realized they were there, they had my rosebushes fighting for survival!

According to Wikipedia, these little critters first arrived in the eastern United States in 1916, from which they slowly spread their way west. As of 2015, there were still nine western states resisting the invasion. As the name suggests, they are a native of Japan, where they are kept in check by a host of natural predators.

As an invasive species in North America, however, they have no natural enemies. No birds, seeing them, are tempted to pick them off the rosebushes and make a treat of them; no toads or turtles think "snack time!" when they are spied in their vicinity. Gardeners, therefore, have to resort to more direct means of getting rid of these pests before they "skeletonize" the foliage. According to the gardening websites I checked out, the best method consists simply of filling a bucket with water and dish soap, handpicking the beetles off the plants, and then dunking them in the soapy water so that they drown. Leaving their carcasses around the plants they like to dine on is supposed to be an effective deterrent as well: Apparently, their own natural self-preservation kicks in when they see fellow beetles decaying around them, and they will take off for less threatening surroundings.

This quarter's study looks at Exodus through Joshua, following the people of Israel from their last years in Egypt through the conquest of the promised land. As I read the articles and commentary for this quarter, the thought came to me that to the Egyptians, the Israelites must have seemed as threatening as my Japanese beetles were to my rose bushes. Even after 400 years in Egypt, they were still considered foreigners, their numbers were growing every year, and they must have used a lot of natural resources in daily living. Like me and my Japanese beetles, the Egyptians simply wanted to be rid of these "pests"!

Sadly, their methods were as heartless as drowning beetles in soapy water. When ordering Hebrew midwives to kill male infants proved ineffective, the Egyptian overlords increased the workload on the people, perhaps in hopes that the harsh working conditions would reduce the population through physical exhaustion and early death.

Yet God ultimately intervened to save His people, ironically calling out one of those who had been spared from death as an infant: Moses, who had been taken into Pharaoh's household and raised by his daughter. The years that followed helped to form the people of God into a nation that would one day be the means of bringing the Light of salvation to all humankind.