



SIEBENQUELL

The Wells are everywhere



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When biblical stories lead us to a well, they intend to send a signal to the listener. At the well human hearts are put to the test. A well is the touch-stone of the human heart.

For nomads in desert landscapes it is natural that wells would have such a significance, for water is not to be found in fullness and yet it is necessary for life. They need water in order to still their thirst, in order to cook and to wash. But they also need water to keep their herds alive, the animals that represent their livelihood. That is why water is so desired. If the water is also rare and not easily accessible, it becomes more precious and valuable in the eyes of those who seek it. And the water gains in value and importance when many others also need and want it. In economics this is called supply and demand.

This is also the reason why the well becomes the place where the human heart is tested. Where desire and need show themselves, the heart is tested. How do we deal with others when it is a matter of what is of vital importance to us? How do we behave when it is a matter of our interests, but many others have their interests and needs and have presented them? Questions arise in us during such »well situations«. Will we get our fair share, or will we come up short? Will we have access to what we need and desire, or will others block us? Will our needs be taken into account? Will we have to wait while others come first, or do we always have to first take care of our interests and everyone else can wait on us?

The biblical scenes at a well always pose a penetrating question to us: Do we have panicked hearts? The panicked heart develops in every place where we believe, that there is not bread and life and water enough for or all. And the »well situations« of life create such panicked hearts with extraordinary ease.

In Genesis 24, 11-14, Abraham's servant arrives at a well in the city of Nahor while on his search for a bride for Isaac. He waits there and prays: »I am standing here by the spring of water, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. Let the girl to whom I shall say, 'Please offer your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' - let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.« Rebecca will do precisely this and thereby reveal to the servant the kind of heart that beats in this woman. She has no panicked heart and therefore is able to serve others, even before her own interests.

One generation later, Rebecca's son, Jacob, will stand at a well where he encounters the immortal beloved of his life, his venerated Rachel (Gen 29, 1-10). Although a stone lays over the opening of the well and all the shepherds must wait until all the herds have arrived, he rolls the stone aside when Rachel arrives with her herds. He gives her flocks to drink and thereby demonstrates an unconventional willingness to help that goes beyond planning and regulations. And Rachel receives a revelation about the heart of this man.

Moses helps the seven daughters of the priest of Midian at a well. They want to water the flocks of their father, but the other shepherds drive them off. Moses intervenes and helps them gain access to the well (Exodus 2, 15-17). In doing so, Moses reveals a heart that takes the part of the weaker, even if he has no personal advantage because of it.

We have our own wells at which our hearts are tested. Every place where we, with our interests, needs and desires, meet people with their own interests, needs and desires, there ensues a meeting at the well. I stand at the well when I am present to embarking or disembarking a train and must often witness the merciless shoving of people determined to be first, even before other passengers had a chance to leave the train. But I also experience people who wait, who grant the other the time and the space they need. Here human hearts are put to the test.

I stand at the well when I enter a church to attend a concert and experience the icy inconsiderateness of people toward those who are slower or more feeble than they. Their only concern is to get in and find their seat. However, I also experience people who offer a helping hand to others and make room so that others can find a place to sit. Here human hearts are put to the test.

I stand at the well when I am at a stairwell and no one is willing to help an elderly man carry his burden (his suitcase), but rather push themselves past him, irritated and annoyed. I stand at the well, when a young man pushes his way past me and an elderly woman and then rejoices that he has seized the last seat on the subway. However, I also encounter friendly people who take the time to carry burdens and are gallant enough to lift their weary bones in order to offer a place of rest to more aged bones. Here human hearts are put to the test.

The wells are everywhere. For in every place where people and their interests come together, God tests their hearts at the place of encounter. And at these wells we will discover what we truly believe, who we really are and what kind of person we have become. The wells are everywhere, and in the waters of these wells our true face will be mirrored. What do we want to see in that reflection? What kind of people do we wish to be?

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