



SIEBENQUELL

Do you want to be an explorer of life?



SOURCE: ROSEMARIE MONNERJAHN 2014

Summertime has arrived and with it a time of rest. Life slows a little and becomes quieter, people take vacations and seek rejuvenation on the beach, at the BBQ or simply laying in the garden.

However, summertime also has more to offer, if we want it. It can also be a time of Sabbath, a time of deepening in which we come to the **topics** and intentions for which we usually have too little time and too little space. And we should probably take this time of deepening more seriously than we usually do.

For, there is also the time after summer. Then we return to the offices and carry on where we left off and are haunted by the question, »Was that all?« For as lovely as summertime is, afterwards we return to the daily grind. But, does it have to be that way? Does life have to mean that we pour all our strength and joy into a few weeks of summer and then return resignedly to a life that does not truly fulfil us?

In the Book of Numbers there is a wonderful story I would like to share with you (Numbers 13, 1-33). Over the weeks of July and August I would like to invite you to immerse yourself into it. It leads us, right from the start, to a core question of our being: Do I want to be an explorer of life, or merely a tourist?

This story takes place at the beginning of Israel's time in the desert. Thus, it is a story of new beginnings. And stories of new beginnings are never only about opportunity and offers. They are always also about the cost which the new opportunities and offers entail.

The story is also a tale of boundaries and borders. It takes place on the border between the desert and the Promised Land. The desert is merely a transitional stage between Egypt, the symbol of slavery and oppression, and the Promised Land, the image of the undiscovered country, the promise and the future.

Here we should remember, that the people, after 1½ years of wandering the desert, are already standing at the threshold to the Promised Land. We are so accustomed to speaking of 40 years of wandering in the desert, that we have forgotten this critical biblical story. And it tells us something surprising. After only 18 months, Israel could have entered into the Promised Land.

That is why this story is so important to us, so that we do not unnecessarily protract out days of desert wandering. For this story squarely places us before the question of whether we want to enter into life as explorers (adventurers) or whether we would like to pass by life as tourists. This tale is also a story about **the courage to make decisions**.

The people yearned for a place in which they could live since the days of their oppression. Yet here, at the border to the land of their dreams and hopes, the people lack the courage to make a decision. This lack of courage leads to the fact, that the people need another 38 more years before they enter the land. That means, those who do not have the courage to decide will wander aimlessly and without orientation.

For precisely this reason we must make this decision. Here we need to consider a biblical nuance. Wandering and setting forth are two different concepts. Wandering is a curse, because it has no aim and no orientation. Wandering is a curse, because it cannot say what it wants. Consider the fate of Cain (Gen 4, 11-12): **»And cursed are you from the land.... Aimless and rambling shall you be on the earth.«** (after Martin Buber). Setting forth, on the other hand, is life. Abraham is to set forth in order to explore new possibilities for life (cf. Gen 12, 1-4). When the people freeze in fear, God tells Moses: **»Speak to the sons and daughters of Israel and tell them to set forth.«** (Exodus 14, 15). In order that we might not wander aimlessly through life, we should find the courage to face this question. What is it that I really want? The heart of an adventurer, who explores life to the full? Or the heart of a tourist, who briefly enjoys life and then waits for the next time to come around? Do we really want to live from holiday to holiday, or do we want to make every day count?

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