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Irmgard

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Keine Stimmen

Off Through the Desert—More Than Just a Story



Devotional/Lection: Off Through the Desert—More Than Just a Story

*This article is from the *Forum* magazine and is attached in full as a PDF below—only excerpts are reproduced here.*

Journey Through the Desert

This camp theme is particularly well-suited because the story itself symbolizes the Christian life and directly conveys the relationship between God and humankind. You can therefore simply let the story speak for itself and don't need to strain to find parallels between the biblical story and the children's everyday lives.

God Chooses His People

The children begin the week as slaves in Egypt, forced to work and subjected to torment. The moment comes when they are called out and granted freedom.

God promises them a new land and guides them day and night on their journey there. But it doesn't take long before the Israelites lose their faith and feel trapped: behind them are the vengeful Egyptians—ahead of them, a seemingly insurmountable gorge. They regret not having stayed in Egypt. Nevertheless, God holds back their pursuers with a massive pillar of smoke and builds a rope bridge for His people, allowing them to cross the gorge with dry feet. This event is commemorated, not least, during the Passover.

Guided by a visible cloud—like a treasure hunt—the people continue deeper into the desert wilderness until the cloud suddenly comes to a halt at a certain place. Here they set up camp, where they are to live for a while longer.

Moments That Sweeten Life

Every morning, God blesses the people with manna. At the campsite, popcorn lies ready to be harvested. And even if there were to be nothing but corn for a whole day, one would be amazed at just how creative Israeli cuisine is. Cornflakes, corn rolls, corn salad, popcorn, polenta, and corn on the cob surprisingly cause very little grumbling.

More puzzling, however, is the yellow, tasteless drink that one day turns up in the canteen. In the end, at any rate, it clearly shows that God and Moses were serious about destroying the Golden Calf.

Recovery After the Raid
It's not easy to live in the desert. Dangers such as water shortages, hostile peoples, or internal strife must be recognized early on and countered. God's decree that they must wander in circles in the desert for an additional forty years is particularly harsh—even though the one-time camping trip is actually quite an adventure in itself. The attack by the Amalekites is particularly difficult to endure. So the people are especially relieved when the "Mara Morning" is on the schedule: Children are divided into wellness groups, where they prepare their presentations and receive targeted training. Whether it's foot, head, face, or back massages, saunas and whirlpools, or aerobics and refreshments, nothing is missing at the campsite. And as soon as the oasis opens, the children take turns enjoying the amenities and serving others—a treat, not just for the kids.

Why I Recommend This Topic

Just as God chose His people and led them through the desert to prepare them for the coming work of redemption, we tried to place our youth group members in similar situations and help them understand God's ingenious ways. Often, we ourselves reached the point where we could only marvel at how lovingly God had saved us.

Off into the Desert

References



- **Content and image: Forum** Kind, Issue 4/09, page 8. Summer camp of the FEG Wetzikon youth group, 2009. Exodus—and Life as a Christian. © Copyright www.forum-kind.ch

- **Author:** Andrin Stäheli, lead organizer of the 2009 SOLA for FEG Wetzikon.

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