



SIEBENQUELL

How do I speak of that which I have experienced? The Reporting



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The days of exploration last for 40 days, 40 is always the number of fullness in Biblical storytelling. Here two moments converge. First, a sufficient and suitable amount of time is taken to take stock of the situation and to gather the evidence.

Secondly, however, the time is also limited, so that the important, life giving decisions that determine the future are not unnecessarily delayed or postponed.

Then the reporting takes place, and not just with words, but with solid evidence and facts, which are then presented. In this report the explorers say:

»And they told him, We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea, and along the Jordan.« (Numbers 13, 27-29)

The explorers are in agreement about the facts:

1. The land fulfills what God has promised: there really is milk and honey, freedom to live and possibilities for development. This land is fruitful. This is a place where you can live.
2. We are dealing with strong people. This will demand our own strength.
3. We are dealing with existing, firm forms and structures. The cities are large and fortified. If we want to live there, then we need to deal with these forms and structures.

In other words, it is a mixed blessing. Not everything that was discovered will serve and foster their goals.

Then, in verse 30, it says: **»But Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.»** Here Caleb becomes the representative and advocate of the courage needed for every new future. Without courage, no future. He says, that in the face of all these facts, the task remains fundamentally doable.

However, Caleb is not the only voice in this story. He never is. In the verses 31-32 we are introduced to the voices of fear and contradiction.

»Then the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we. So they brought to the Israelites an unfavorable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size.«

The other party of explorers spread false rumors. They take the facts and integrate them one-sidedly and twist them. In the first, common report the people in the new country are merely strong. Now they have suddenly become stronger. That, however, is a one-sided and relatively arbitrary interpretation, made without any examination. How would they know that the people of Canaan are stronger without putting the strength of both sides to the test?

Then it gets worse, and the instructions of God as to how to examine the land are now totally disregarded. Now they start to exaggerate.

»There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.« (V. 33)

They are afraid, and fear tends to exaggerate. Remember the warning of humility. (Cf. the previous reflection). Suddenly the problems become larger than they are in reality. Now the normal citizens of the land have all become giants. In this exaggeration we see the twofold effect of fear. It not only makes the problem bigger than it is, it makes us smaller than we are in reality. Suddenly we are grasshoppers. And fears lead to speculations that confirm our deepest anxiety: **»And to them we appeared as such as well!«**

This story poses questions to us when we stand before the decision as to whether or not we should risk the adventure of entering a new life and undiscovered possibilities.

How do we aid the decision-making processes for our lives?

Do we speak of the facts or of our fears?

Do we speak of the stuff of our experiences in order to form an opinion?

Or do we speak of the stuff of our fears, in order to deal with our fears?

Do we interpret the facts in such a way that we direct the decision-making process to where we want to go, or not to go?

Or do we interpret the facts in such a way, that they serve an authentic making of an opinion?

If we want to enter a new and undiscovered land of the future, then there is no way around these questions.

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