



SIEBENQUELL

How much is a promising future worth to us?



SOURCE: R. MONNERJAHN 2011

Now the whole people, all those who bear the responsibility for the processes of decision-making, are placed before the definitive question that lies at the heart of every life and death decision: How much is a promising future worth to us?

On the border, after the report, we are faced with these questions. Will we work for a promising future even if it demands a clear price from us? Will we take up the challenge, even it entails difficulties? Is a new life valuable to me, even if it includes effort, struggle and conflict? Or are we only willing to work for a promising future if the path has been prepared and smoothed for us, if the problems have been resolved in advance and the hindrances and obstacles have been removed?

Here lies the fundamental choice of all those who stand before the border to the undiscovered country:

What exactly are my (our) expectations about the cost of entering into a new life?

How much is new life worth to me (us)?

How much strength is it worth to me?

How much effort is it worth to me?

How much investment is it worth to me?

And, do I love a promising future and new life enough to pay the price?

If I say no here, at the border to the Promised Land, then there remains one more question. Is there anything that I love enough to pay a price for it?

It is the difference between being touched and moved. When we hear good music, read a good book, see a good movie or listen to inspirational visionaries, then we quickly jump the gun and say that we are *moved* by them. In fact, we are merely touched by them. To be moved by them, would mean that we are set to

- make decisions,
- alter plans,
- undertake actions,
- pay prices,
- undergo adventures,
- pour out commitment.

In Numbers 13, 23 the story speaks of grapes, pomegranates and figs. These are the fruits of the land. In Numbers 20, 5 the people complain bitterly to Moses, that they are now in a barren and desolate land, a region where »we have no corn, no figs, we are without wine and pomegranates.« It was all in their hands, within their grasp, but they decided against entering the undiscovered country where such fruits are to be had.

We want the fruits of the undiscovered country, whether they are pomegranates, peace, new leadership styles, anew commitment to community or a new vitality and attractiveness of our life; but, we do not want the hassle of entering the land where these fruits grow. Israel decides against the land where everything they crave is to be found. Then it complains of the consequences of their own decision.

It is worthwhile to pay attention to this remarkable story. In the end, it tells us that only the encouraging visionaries of a generation enter the Promised Land (Caleb and Joshua). Not even the leadership enters it (cf. Moses). Everyone else dies in the desert, the land of indecision. They die in a place that was supposed to be transitional, but that they turned into a permanent residence.

The desert is not Egypt; it is not the place of slavery. But the desert is also not the fullness of life; it is not the good, broad land of the promise. This leaves all people before all undiscovered countries with choices to be made. To which group do we belong? Are we like Caleb and Joshua, people of clarity, sober assessment and the encouraging word? Or are we people who twist realities that we do not wish to face, people driven by fear who project their fears on others to find allies in the strategy of avoidance?

Now that the quiet days of summer are drawing to a close, and we face a return to the usual course of our days, we need to ask the grand question that has accompanied us all summer long over these five meditations on the Book of Numbers: To which voice will we listen.

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