

Who's Leading?

"When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before." (Joshua. 3:3-4, NIV)

- Reading the fascinating narrative of Israel crossing the Jordan these couple of verses challenged me immediately: Do I allow the Lord to lead me into unknown territory?

Here is a whole people on the verge of crossing the River Jordan to conquer all the territories God promised to give to them, but they aren't allowed to deploy the obvious first. Sure, two spies had been to Jericho, bringing back the good news of their enemies already trembling with fear, because they witnessed and heard what God had done for His people.

- Incidentally, are the evil powers of this world the Bible is talking about trembling with fear because they witness and hear what the Lord does for us? Or do they perhaps just laugh at us because we are powerless and no force to reckon with?

In any case, Israel was not allowed to act according to common military approach. They didn't send heavily armed raiding patrols to secure the area at the Jordan. They didn't send a vanguard with pontoons and all the gear necessary to cross the river. They didn't send an army with physical weapons to fight an enemy on the same premise. Instead (at least here) they were obedient in allowing the presence of the Lord to make the first move and then followed. Forty years ago a first group of spies had screened and scanned the enemies territory thoroughly, but most of them were dead and things do change over time, don't they? So, entering territory basically unknown to them, God insisted they better let him go first, as a vanguard if you like, and sort things out so that they could go about their mission to enter and occupy the Promised Land successfully. Well, good for them they listened!

- Do I, do we allow God to be our vanguard? Surely, from an economical point of view we are to enter a territory unknown to probably most of our generation. Maybe a couple of spies or so have been there recently. Perhaps some have a glimpse of what it looks like. But by and large today's believers have never experienced the Kingdom, where provision defies any human logic and textbook teaching. We must leave Egypt. We must leave Babylon. So we must leave the world and its financial system as we know and experience it behind to enter the Kingdom. Yet that is as much unknown to us as Canaan was to Israel. Our experience, human knowledge, perception of how an economy works, wisdom on how to make ends meet and be successful in any kind of professional context, all our studies and titles and connections just don't work in the Kingdom of God.
- Think of it, if we had to conquer an enemy on the other side of the river (which sort of we all have to), would we send the priests carrying the symbol of the presence of the Lord into the middle of the river to make it depart for the whole people to get across, just because somebody claims to have heard from God us? I doubt it. We would put our brains together and make a plan, wouldn't we? Of course we aren't crossing literal rivers.
- But wait a minute, here is a thought: perhaps we have to cross (out?) the worldly river of provision to get into the Kingdom? Perhaps we have to allow the Lord's presence to step right into the middle of what we perceive to be refreshing and life spending rivers of the worlds financial system and cause it to part, so that we can cross through on dry ground into what is our land flowing with milk and honey? "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, [...]" (Romans 12:2, NIV) - So who's allowed to lead us?