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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

April 2, 2004



Commentary

God Set The Precedent

Before I discuss Fallujah, the situation needs to be placed in perspective because some of my gentle religious friends are going to scream.

Here is the perspective: The Old Testament, Numbers 31.

Mark Twain, in his last published book, *Letters From Earth*, discussed his observation that in all of his biblical studies, no one ever mentioned Numbers 31. Come to think of it I spent a disproportionate amount of time in Bible study and had never heard of it either.

In Numbers 31, the Bible says God ordered Moses to kill all of the Midianites – men women, children, babies – but to save the virgins, of which there were 32,000. First, it must have been a massive massacre of innocents (old people, women, children and babies) if the population had 32,000 virgins.

More importantly, it is what God ordered Moses to do with the remaining virgins. He ordered them to be given to Moses' conquering troops AND THE PRIESTS!

It seems to me that God was mightily mad with the Midianites, so with that massacre of innocents in mind, I think my solution to the problem of the attack on our people in Fallujah may actually seem pretty tame.

My first reaction was to “nuke Fallujah, “ raze the rubble and turn the remainder into a Wal-Mart. That still would have been far more gentle than God was with the Midianites. On more sober reflection, I decided that slaughtering innocents on purpose is not really a good idea...I’ll let the Bible answer for itself.

I was in the Exchange at the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station when I saw a great T-Shirt – something to the effect, “When it absolutely, positively must be destroyed overnight, Call U.S. Marine Corps.”

That works for me. Within a few days, the U.S. Marines are going to DO something...my only hope is that it is more rather than less, sooner rather than later. After Khobar Towers, two Embassies, the U.S.S. Cole, and the first World Trade Center, not to mention Mogadishu, our nation has either been known for doing too little – or, in the case of Iraq, accused of doing too much.

It is hard to get it “right” – but whatever the Marines do, it is going to be condemned by some as an overreaction, and whatever they do will be less than I wish they would do. I do not want America to be loved in Fallujah – I want us to be feared.

Perhaps not quite as feared as Moses and his troops were feared, but I’ll accept something short of saving all of the virgins and distributing them among our troops and giving them to the Priests. Somehow I think many of those so treated by Moses’ troops probably wished they had been killed outright.

I remember another T-Shirt. While I was teaching at the university a burly marine who, incidentally, was discussing Plato’s Republic, wore a shirt that read: “Kill them all. Let God sort it out.”

Hmmm. Seems to work for God...who am I to argue?

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