

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

The Tenth Anniversary of the attack on the twin towers of The World Trade Centre at New York has come and gone and, thanks to the security arrangements, put in place by the US Government, Al Qaeda was not able to kill anybody, attending the memorial services in what has come to be known as The Big Apple. But I must make an admission to you: I, really, did not know what is this terrorist group with the name of Al Qaeda. And none of my girlfriends seemed to know, also. According to Bo-Bo, my froglike husband, it is an international militant group of Sunni Islamists, originally founded by Osama bin Laden between August 1988 and the last few months of 1989. The name, Al Qaeda, is the translation from the Arabic, meaning 'The Base'. The Frog said that it is a terrorist organisation, damned by the United States of America, The United Nations Security Council, the European Union as well as The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. The (unwritten) manifesto of Al Qaeda includes bringing about an entire break from all foreign influences in Muslim countries and the creation of a new, Islamic caliphate. Al Qaeda maintains that there exists a Christian-Jewish alliance that wants to destroy Islam. The Frog is very knowledgeable about most things political and he seems to keep abreast of material changes in the governments of the world, especially as they apply to Al Qaeda. He used to be a politician, himself, you know. He maintains that some of the problems in China, especially with the Uyghur population which lives, primarily, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, can be traced back to Al Qaeda because there is circumstantial evidence to indicate that some of the militant Uyghurs obtained their training in camps, organised by Al Qaeda operatives. Like Al Qaeda, the Uyghurs want to safeguard their own culture and not be under the yoke of Beijing or any other country. So, armed with this knowledge of Al Qaeda, I investigated the reason that this terrorist organisation would want to attack the United States, killing more than 3,000 innocent civilians on September 11, 2001.

'Civilians and non-combatants are fair game in this struggle of Al Qaeda to gain those goals which are deemed, by it, to be theirs by Divine Right,' The Frog explained. 'The Americans call the death of innocents in a battle as being collateral damage. The death of innocent bystanders in a jihad – Islamic campaign against infidels – on the other hand, is justified, religiously.' At this point, I became very concerned: 'Then, could I be at risk, being an infidel?' To which The Frog said: 'Only if you are in the right place at the wrong time.' And, then, he laughed. But I did not think that it was funny, at all. I was thinking, at one time, of visiting India, but, just before I paid for my airline ticket, that was back in 2008, I heard that some 172 innocent people had been killed in Mumbai by terrorists. That was that: I cancelled the proposed holiday, immediately. And who would have thought that Al-Qaeda would have attacked New York in September of 2001? What was gained by such a dastardly deed?

Throughout the history of the world, there has, always, been terrorists of one sort or another. For some reason that I can never understand, man has sought to kill his fellow man – for no apparent reason. In the First Century before the birth of Christ, believe it or not, the Jews were considered the terrorists of the day. In 72 B.C., the Roman Governor of Iudaea, [Lucius Flavius Silva](#), headed the [Roman Legion X Fretensis](#) and laid siege to Masada, an isolated rock [plateau](#) on the eastern edge of the [Judean Desert](#), overlooking the [Dead Sea](#). The Roman Legion surrounded Masada and built a [circumvallation](#) wall and then a [siege embankment](#) against the western face of the plateau, moving thousands of tons of stones and beaten earth to do so. The rampart was completed in the spring of 73 B.C., allowing the Romans, finally, to breach the wall of the fortress with a [battering ram](#) on April 16. When the Romans entered the fortress, however, they discovered that its 960 inhabitants had set all of the buildings ablaze and had committed [mass suicide](#). The Jews of Masada, led by [Eleazar ben Ya'ir](#), committed suicide by drawing lots as to who should kill whom

rather than permit the Roman Legion the pleasure of killing them. The Torah does not condone suicide so that this was a method of circumventing the teachings of the First Five Books of Moses, also known as The Pentateuch. This was not the first instance of Rome, calling the Jews, a terrorist cult. The Romans hated the Jews.

It is a fact that, whenever there are irreconcilable differences between diametrically opposed religious groups, there are the seeds of discontent which, at any time, may lead to man, killing his fellow man in the name of a god. Today, Al Qaeda is the terrorist group of the Century – sadly.

I am not a religious person, myself, and I do not think that I want to belong to any religion of today or yesterday that teaches intolerance and which advocates the killing of innocents in the name of a deity. It seems strange to me that, throughout the ages, religion, which is supposed to teach, among other things, love, reverence, a system of a defining code of living as a means of achieving spiritual improvements as a standard of practical life and understanding, should be among the most-fertile of sods of international killing fields. We can build spacecraft that can land on the moon and the planets in our solar system. We can study the seabed, miles beneath the surfaces of the oceans of the world by the use of submersibles. We can find cures for deadly diseases. We can operate on the heart of man without killing him, something that was considered impossible not more than 50 years ago. We can build skyscrapers, higher than man had ever thought possible. We can do so much today that was never thought possible in days of yore.

But we cannot learn to live together in peace and harmony with our fellow man. What a strange animal is the genus, Homo sapiens!

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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