

***De Expugnatione Terrae Sanctae per Saladinum: The Battle of Hattin, 1187*<sup>1</sup>**

*This account was written by an eyewitness, possibly a Templar or Hospitallar.*

In the year of the Lord's incarnation 1187, the King of Syria [Saladin] gathered together an army as numerous as the sands of the seashore in order to wage war on the land of Judah. He came up to the Jaulan, across the [Jordan] River, and there made camp.

The King of Jerusalem [Guy de Lusignan] also gathered his army from all of Judea and Samaria. They assembled and pitched camp near the springs at Saffuriyah. The Templars and Hospitallers also assembled many people from all their castles and came to the camp....Not a man fit for war remained in the cities, towns, or castles without being urged to leave by the King's order. Nor was this host sufficient. Indeed, the King of England's treasure<sup>2</sup> was opened up and they gave a fee to everyone who could bear a lance or bow into battle. The army was quite large: 1,200 knights, innumerable Turcoples, and 18,000 or more infantry. They gloried in their multitude of men, the trappings of their horses, in their breastplates, helmets, lances, and golden shields, but they did not believe in God, nor did they hope in the salvation of him who is the protector and savior of Israel. Rather, they were taken up with their own thoughts and became vain.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1187hattin.asp>

<sup>2</sup> King Henry II of England had a few years earlier donated a considerable sum of money for the defense of the Holy Land. His treasury, which had been placed at the disposal of the military order, was now broken open and used to hire mercenaries to help throw back Saladin's attack.

They sent to Jerusalem to ask the Patriarch to bring the Holy Cross with him to the camp...so that they might become bearers and keepers of the Lord's Cross...

Meanwhile, the Syrians crossed the Jordan. They overran and laid waste the area around the springs of Cresson, from Tiberias to Bethany...After these advance parties had wrought their destruction, Saladin and his whole army crossed the river. Saladin ordered his forces to push on to Tiberias and besiege it. On Thursday, July 2, the city was surrounded by archers and the battle was joined. The Countess [Eschiva, wife of Raymond III of Tripoli] and the Galileans, since the city was not fortified, sent messengers to the Count and King with the news: "The Turks have surrounded the city. In the fighting, they have pierced the walls and are just now entering against us. Send help at once or we shall be taken and made captive..."

Toward evening on Thursday, July 2, the King of Jerusalem, after he had heard the Galileans' letter, called together all the leaders of the army so that they might give council concerning the action to be taken. They all advised that at dawn they should march out, accompanied by the Lord's cross, ready to fight the enemy, with all the men armed and arrayed in battle formation. Thus arrayed they would relieve the city of Tiberias. The Count of Tripoli, when he heard this, spoke: "Tiberias is my city and my wife is there. None of you is so fiercely attached, save to Christianity, as I am to the city. None of you is so desirous as I am to succor or aid Tiberias. We and the King, however, should not move away from water, food, and other necessities to lead such a multitude of men to death from solitude, hunger, thirst, and scorching heat. You are well aware that since the heat is

searing and the number of people is large, they could not survive half a day without an abundance of water. Furthermore, they could not reach the enemy without suffering a great shortage of water, accompanied by the destruction of men and of beasts. Stay, therefore, at this midway point, close to food and water, for certainly the Saracens have risen to such heights of pride that when they have taken the city, they will not turn aside to left or right, but will head straight through the vast solitude to us and challenge us to battle. Then our men, refreshed and filled with bread and water, will cheerfully set out from camp for the fray. We and our horses will be fresh; we will be aided and protected by the Lord's cross. Thus we will fight mightily against an unbelieving people who will be wearied by thirst and who will have no place to refresh themselves. Thus you see that if, in truth, the grace of Jesus Christ remains with us, the enemies of Christ's cross, before they can get to the sea or return to the river, will be taken captive or else killed by sword, by lance, or by thirst. But if, which God forbid, things were perchance to go against us, we have our ramparts here to which we could flee..." But the saying of wisdom: "Woe to the land whose King is a child and whose citizens dine in the morning" [Eccles. 10:6] was fulfilled in them. For our young King followed youthful counsel, while our citizens, in hatred and jealousy, ate their neighbors' meat. They departed from the advice which would have saved them and others. Because of their foolishness and simple-mindedness they lost land, people, and selves.

On Friday, July 3, therefore, they marched out by troops, leaving behind the necessities of life. The Count of Tripoli was in the first rank, as befitted his dignity. The others followed on his left or right, according to

the custom of the realm. The royal battalion and the battalion of the Holy Cross followed and, because of the lay of the land, the Templars came last, for they were the army's rear guard.

They marched to Saffuriyah so that, as was said before, they could go on to Tiberias. Three miles from the city they came to a hamlet called Marescallia. At this place they were so constrained by enemy attacks and by thirst that they wished to go no further.

They were going to pass through a confined, rocky area in order to reach the Sea of Galilee, which was a mile away. For this reason the Count sent word to the King: "We must hurry and pass through this area, so that we and our men may be safe near the water. Otherwise we will be in danger of making camp at a waterless spot." The King replied: "We will pass through at once."

The Turks were meanwhile attacking the army's rear, so that the Templars and the others in the rear were barely able to struggle on. Suddenly the King (a punishment for sin) ordered the tents to be pitched. Thus were we betrayed to our death. The Count, when he looked back and saw the tents pitched, exclaimed: "Alas, Lord God, the battle is over! We have been betrayed unto death. The Kingdom is finished!"

And so, in sorrow and anguish, they camped on a dry site where, during the night, there flowed more blood than water. The sons of Esau [the Muslim army] surrounded the people of God [Crusaders] and set fire to the desert [brush] round about them. Throughout the night the hungry and thirsty men were harassed further by arrows and by the fire's heat and flames... That night God indeed gave them the bread of tears to eat and the wine of compunction to drink.

At length...after the clouds of death had opened, light dawned on a day of sorrow and tribulation, of grief and destruction. When day had dawned, the King of Syria forsook the city of Tiberias and with his whole army came up to the camping ground to give battle to the Christians. He now prepared to attack our men.

Our men formed their battle lines and hurried to pass through this region in the hope that when they had regained a watering place and had refreshed themselves, they could attack and fight the foe more vigorously. The Count moved out to take the spot which the Turks had already begun to approach.

When our men were arrayed and grouped in battle formation the infantry were ordered to take positions facing the enemy's arrows, so that the infantry would be protected from an enemy charge by the knights' lances. Thus, with each providing protection for the other, they would both be safe.

By this time the Saracens had already arrived. The infantry, banded together in a single wedge-shaped formation, clambered at full speed to the very summit of a high mountain, leaving the army to its fate. The King, the Bishop, and others sent word, begging them to return to defend the Lord's cross, the heritage of the Crucified, the Lord's army, and themselves. They replied: "We are not coming because we are dying of thirst and we will not fight." Again the command was given, and again they persisted in their refusal.

The Templars, Hospitallers, and Turcoples, meanwhile, were engaged in a fierce rear guard action. They could not win, however, because enemies sprang up on every side, shooting arrows and wounding

Christians. When they had gone on for a little bit, they shouted to the King, asking for some help. The King and the others saw that the infantry were not going to return and that they themselves could not hold out against the Turkish arrows without the sergeants. Accordingly, by the grace of the Lord's cross, they ordered the tents to be put up, in order to block the Saracen charges and so that they could hold out more easily. The battle formations were, therefore, broken up. The units gathered around the Holy Cross, where they were confused and intermixed here and there. The men who were with the Count of Tripoli in the first group saw that the King, the Hospitallers, the Templars, and everyone else were jumbled together and mingled with the Turks. They also saw that there was a multitude of the barbarians between themselves and the King, so that they could not get through to return to the Lord's cross. They cried out: "Those who can get through may go, since the battle is not going in our favor. We have now lost even the chance to flee." Meanwhile, thousands and thousands of Syrians were charging at the Christians, shooting arrows and killing them.

In the meantime, the Bishop of Acre, the bearer of the Lord's cross, was mortally wounded. He passed on the task of bearing the cross to the Bishop of Lydda. A large group of pagans charged on the infantry and pitched them from the top of the steep mountain to whose summit they had previously fled. They destroyed the rest, taking some captive and killing others...

Upon seeing this the Count and his men, who had been riding onward, together with Balian of Naples, Reginald of Sidon, and the other half-castes, turned back. The speed of their horses in this confined space trampled down the Christians and made a kind of bridge, giving the riders a

level path. In this manner they got out of that narrow place by fleeing over their own men, over the Turks, and over the cross. Thus it was that they escaped with only their lives.

The Saracens gathered around the Lord's wooden cross, the King, and the rest, and destroyed the church. What more can be said? The Saracens triumphed over the Christians and did with them as they pleased...What can I say? It would be more fitting to weep and wail than to say anything. Alas! Should I describe with impure lips how the precious wood of the Lord, our redeemer, was seized by the damnable hands of the damned? Woe to me that in the days of my miserable life I should be forced to see such things....

### **Ernoul: The Battle of Hattin, 1187<sup>3</sup>**

*This account was written by a local Frank, "Ernoul", soon after 1197.*

Now I will tell you about King Guy and his host. They left the spring of Saffuriya to go to the relief of Tiberias. As soon as they had left the water behind, Saladin came before them and ordered his skirmishers to harass them from morning until midday. The heat was so great that they could not go on so that they could come to water. The king and all the other people were spread out and did not know what to do. They could not turn back for the losses would have been too great. He sent to the count of Tripoli, who led the advance guard, to ask advice as to what to do. He sent word that he should pitch his tent and make camp. The king gladly accepted this bad advice. When (the count) had given him good advice he

would never take it. Some people in the host said that if the Christians had gone on to meet the Saracens, Saladin would have been defeated.

As soon as they were encamped, Saladin ordered all his men to collect brushwood, dry grass, stubble and anything else with which they could light fires, and make barriers which he had made all round the Christians. They soon did this, and the fires burned vigorously and the smoke from the fires was great; and this, together with the heat of the sun above them caused them discomfort and great harm. Saladin had commanded caravans of camels loaded with water from the Sea of Tiberias to be brought up and had water pots placed near the camp. The water pots were then emptied in view of the Christians so that they should have still greater anguish through thirst, and their mounts too...

When the fires were lit and the smoke was great, the Saracens surrounded the host and shot their darts through the smoke and so wounded and killed men and horses. When the king saw the disadvantageous position the host was in, he called the master of the Temple and Prince Raynald and told them to give him their advice. They counselled him that he must fight the Saracens...Just as the divisions were being put in position and the battle lines ordered, five knights from the count of Tripoli's division left him and went to Saladin and said, "Sire, what are you doing? Go and take the Christians for they are all defeated." When he heard these words he ordered his squadron to move forward, and they moved off and approached the Christians. When the king was aware that Saladin was coming against him he ordered the count of Tripoli to charge...The count and his division charged at a large squadron of Saracens. The Saracens parted and made a way through and let them pass; then, when they were in

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1187ernoul.asp>

the middle of them, they surrounded them. Only 10 or 12 knights from the count's division escaped them. Among those who escaped were the count of Tripoli and Raymond, son of the prince of Antioch, and the four sons of the lady of Tiberias. When the count saw that they were defeated he did not dare go to Tiberias which was only 2 miles away, for he feared that if he shut himself up in there and Saladin found out he could come and take him. He went off with what company he had and went to the city of Tyre.

After this division had been defeated the anger of God was so great against the Christian host because of their sins that Saladin vanquished them quickly; between the hours of tierce and nones<sup>4</sup> he had won almost all the field. He captured the king, the Master of the Temple, Prince Raynald, ...and so many other barons and knights that it would take too long to give the names of all of them; the Holy Cross also was lost...

This disaster befell Christendom at a place called the Horns of Hattin (Karnehatin) 4 miles from Tiberias on Saturday 4 July 1187... When Saladin had left the field with great joy and great victory and was in his camp, he ordered all the Christian prisoners who had been captured that day to be brought before him. They brought to him first the king, the master of the Temple, Prince Raynald, Marquis Boniface, Humphrey of Toron, Aimery the constable, Hugh of Gibelet and several other knights. When he was them all together before him he told the king that he would have great joy and would consider himself greatly honoured now that he had in his power such valuable prisoners as the King of Jerusalem, the Master of the Temple and the other barons. He ordered that a syrup diluted

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<sup>4</sup> i.e. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.. This is probably allegorical, being the period Jesus was on the cross.

with water in a cup of gold be brought. He tasted it, then gave it to the king to drink, saying: "Drink deeply". The king drank, like a man who was extremely thirsty, then handed the cup on to Prince Raynald. Prince Raynald would not drink. When Saladin saw that he had handed the cup to Prince Raynald, he was irritated and told him: "Drink, for you will never drink again!". The prince replied that if it pleased God, he would never drink or eat anything of his (Saladin's). Saladin asked him: "Prince Raynald, if you held me in your prison as I now hold you in mine, what, by your law, would you do to me?". "So help me God", he replied, "I would cut off your head". Saladin was greatly enraged at this most insolent reply, and said: "Pig! You are my prisoner, yet you answer me so arrogantly?" He took a sword in his hand and thrust it right through his body. The mamluks who were standing by rushed at him and cut off his head. Saladin took some of the blood and sprinkled it on his head in recognition that he had taken vengeance on him. Then he ordered that they carry the head to Damascus, and it was dragged along the ground to show the Saracens whom the prince had wronged what vengeance he had had. Then he commanded the king and the other prisoners to be taken to Damascus, where they were put in prison as was appropriate for them.

### **Imad Ad-Din on the Battle of Hattin<sup>5</sup>**

*Imad ad-Din (1125-1201), who gives an account of the battle below, was Saladin's secretary. Although rather florid in its style, his narrative of the battle includes many important details not found in the Christian sources.*

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<sup>5</sup> From Arab Historians of the Crusades, ed. F. Gabrieli, transl. E.J. Costello and F. Gabrieli (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 129-37; in S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, The Crusades: A Reader (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003), 154-158.

Saladin surrounded the town of Tiberias with his personal guard and his most faithful troops. He advanced the infantry and sappers... and the artillery, surrounded the walls and began to demolish the houses, giving battle fiercely and not sparing the city in the attack. This was Thursday, and he was at the head of his troops. The sappers began to mine one of the towers. They demolished it, knocked it down, leapt onto it and took possession of it. Night fell, and while the dawn of victory was breaking for them, the night of woe was darkening for enemy. The citadel put up resistance and the [Frankish] countess [Eschiva] shut herself up there with her sons...

[Raymond of Tripoli asked the King of Jerusalem for help]... He gave him precise promises without having to be asked twice, and set out on the march with his army, his sight and his hearing, his dragons and demons, beasts and wolves, the followers of his error and the faction of his evil deeds... This was Friday 24 Rabi [that is, July 3]. As soon as the news was verified the sultan confirmed that his decision, based on his earlier judgment, was accurate, and rejoiced to hear that they were on the march; "If our objective is gained," he said, "our request will have been heard in full and our ambition will have been achieved. Thanks be to God, our good fortune will now be renewed, our swords sharp, our courage valiant, our victory swift. If they are really defeated, killed and captured, Tiberias and all Palestine will have no one left to defend them or to impede our conquest."

Thus he sought God's best [fortune] and set off casting all delay aside. On Friday 24 Rabi the Franks were on the march toward Tiberias with all their forces, moving as fast as if they were always going downhill. Their

hordes rolled on, their lions roared, their vultures flew above them, their cries rose up, the horizon was hidden by the clouds of them, their heads sought eagerly for those who were to strike them off. They looked like mountains on the march, like seas boiling over, wave upon wave, with their crowding ranks, their seething approach—mutilated barbarian warriors... Ahead of them the sultan had drawn up his battalions and strengthened all his resolve for the fight. He set his army to face them and kept a watch on their vanguard in case they should charge; he cut off their access to water and filled in the wells, which caused them great hardship. He prevented their getting down to the water and set himself between them and their objective, keeping them at a distance...

Night separated the two sides and the cavalry barred both the roads. Islam passed the night face to face with unbelief, monotheism at war with trinitarianism, the way of righteousness looking down upon error, faith opposing polytheism. ... Finally, when day dawned and the morning gleamed out, when dawn sent waves of light across the sky and the clangor of the trumpets startled the crow from the dust... when blades were unsheathed and prevarication ripped away, then the archers began to scorch with their burning shafts men destined for hell fire; the bows hummed and the bowstrings sang, the warriors' pliant lances danced, unveiling the brides of battle... The Franks hoped for a respite and their army in desperation sought for a way of escape. But at every way out they were barred, and tormented by the heat of war without being able to rest... They were impotent, driven off, pushed to extremes and driven back, every charge thrown off and destroyed, every action or attack captured and put in chains... As the arrows struck them down those who had seemed like lions

now seemed like hedgehogs. The arrows beat them down and opened great gaps in their ranks. They sought refuge on the hill of Hattin to protect them from the flood of defeat, and Hattin was surrounded by the flags of destruction. ...They hoped to improve their position by dismounting from their horses, and they fought tenaciously, but the swords went through them as a torrent flows and our army surrounded them as hellfire surrounds the damned. Finally they resorted to saddling the ground and their girth clasped the nipples of the plain.

The devil and his crew were taken, the king and his counts were captured, and the sultan sat to review his chief prisoners, who came forward stumbling in their fetters like drunken men. The grand master of the Templars was brought in his sins, and many of the Templars and Hospitallers with him...

The plain was covered with prisoners and corpses...I passed by them and saw the limbs of the fallen cast naked on the field of battle, scattered in pieces over the site of the encounter, lacerated and disjointed, with heads cracked open, throats split, spines broken, necks shattered, feet in pieces, noses mutilated, extremities torn off, members dismembered, parts shredded, eyes gouged out, stomachs disemboweled, hair colored with blood, the praecordium slashed, fingers sliced off, the thorax shattered, the ribs broken, the joints dislocated, the chests smashed, throats slit, bodies cut in half, arms pulverized, lips shriveled, foreheads pierced, forelocks dyed scarlet, breasts covered with blood, ribs pierced, elbows disjointed, bones broken, tunics torn off, faces lifeless, wounds gaping, skin flayed, fragments chopped off, hair lopped, backs skinless, bodies dismembered, teeth knocked out, blood spilt, life's last breath exhaled, necks lolling,

joints slackened, pupils liquefied, heads hanging, livers crushed, ribs staved in, heads shattered, breasts flayed, spirits flown, their very ghosts crushed; like stones among stones, a lesson to the wise....

At the same time as the king was taken, the "true cross" was also captured, and the idolaters who were trying to defend it were routed. It was this cross, brought into position and raised on high, to which all Christians prostrated themselves and bowed their heads. Indeed, they maintain that it is made of the wood of the cross on which, they say, he whom they adore was hung, and so they venerate it and prostrate themselves before it. They had housed it in a casing of gold, adorned with pearls and gems, and kept it ready for the festival of the Passion, for the observance of their yearly ceremony. When the priests exposed it to view and the heads (of the bearers) bore it along all would run and cast themselves down around it, and no one was allowed to lag behind or hang back without forfeiting his liberty.

Its capture was for them more important than the loss of the king and was the gravest blow that they sustained in that battle. The cross was a prize without equal, for it was the supreme object of their faith. To venerate it was their prescribed duty, for it was their God, before whom they would bow their foreheads to the ground, and to which their mouths sang hymns. They fainted at its appearance, they raised their eyes to contemplate it, they were consumed with passion when it was exhibited and boasted of nothing else when they had seen it. They went into ecstasies at its reappearance, they offered up their lives for it and sought comfort from it, so much so that they had copies made of it which they worshipped, before which they prostrated themselves in their houses and on which they

called when they gave evidence. So when the great cross was taken great was the calamity that befell them, and the strength drained from their loins. Great was the number of the defeated, exalted the feelings of the victorious army. It seemed as if, once they knew of the capture of the cross, none of them would survive that day of ill-omen. They perished in death or imprisonment, and were overcome by force and violence. The sultan encamped on the plain of Tiberias like a lion in the desert or the moon in its full splendor.

**Baha ad-Din, *Life of Saladin*<sup>6</sup>**

*Baha ad-Din was one of Saladin's personal retainers, beginning 1188.*

In the year 583 [that is, 1187], at the battle of Hattin—a famous day's fight of which, please God, we shall speak in its proper place—Prince Arnat [that is, Reynald of Chatillon], lord of el Kerak, and the king of the Franks of the seacoast [that is, Guy of Lusignan], were both taken prisoner, and the sultan commanded them to be brought before him. This accursed Arnat was a great infidel, and a very strong man. On one occasion, when there was a truce between the Muslims and the Franks, he had treacherously attacked and carried off a caravan that passed through his territory, coming from Egypt. He seized these people, put them to torture, and put some of them in grain—pits, and imprisoned some in narrow cells. When they objected that there was a truce between the two peoples, he replied: “Ask your Mohammed to deliver you.” The sultan, to whom these Words were reported, took an oath to slay the infidel with his own hand, if

God should ever place him in his power. The day of the battle of Hattin God delivered this man into the hands of the sultan, and he resolved at once to slay him, that he might fulfill his oath. He commanded him to be brought before him, together with the king. The latter complained of thirst, and the sultan ordered a cup of sherbet to be given him. The king, having drunk some of it, handed the cup to Arnat, whereupon the sultan said to the interpreter: “Say to the king, ‘It is you who give him drink, but I give him neither to drink nor to eat.’” By these words he wished it to be understood that honor forbade him to harm any man who had tasted his hospitality. He then struck him on the neck with his own hand, to fulfill the vow he had made. After this, when he had taken Acre, he delivered all the prisoners, to the number of about four thousand, from their wretched durance, and sent them back to their own country and their homes, giving each of them a sum of money for the expenses of his journey. This is what I have been told by many persons, for I was not present myself when it took place.

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<sup>6</sup> in S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt, *The Crusades: A Reader* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003), 152-3.