

# The Horns of Hattin

by Sir Knight Ben Williams

Few events in history can be identified as true turning points, points in the unraveling of time where history is irrevocably altered. The Battle of Hattin is one such point, a waterfall in the river of time that inexorably moved the destiny of the Christian Empire toward a new horizon.

The Battle of Hattin ultimately resulted in the fall of Jerusalem, the levy of the Saladin tithe throughout Europe, the death of one Pope, and the onset of the Third Crusade. In time, the Christians withdrew from the Holy Land almost entirely. All of this could have been avoided if not for the actions of one man, Raynald of Chatillon.

It's important to understand this man, his character, and his actions in order to understand how, in time, he could unite the warring Muslim factions against him and in so doing, assist the rise to power of the Templars' greatest adversary, Salalad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub - "Saladin," the "Defender of the Faith."

## Raynald of Chatillon

Raynald of Chatillon was a scurrilous man by all accounts, cruel, greedy, ambitious, resorting to any tactics, no matter how low, to increase his power and wealth. He makes a great case study in medieval villainy.

Contrary to popular opinion, fostered in part by fictionalization in movies such as *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), Raynald of Chatillon was not a Templar. That he allied with the Templar Grand Master, Gerard de Ridefort, however, is true, but this "unholy alliance" was likely the result of personal misgivings the Grand Master had for other political rivals in the Christian states. (We'll get to that in a minute.)

Raynald's exact origin and arrival in the Holy Land are both uncertain. He probably arrived with the Second Crusade. We are not entirely sure where he came from, but we know he entered the service of the Princess Regnant of Antioch, Constance, sometime after 1147. Following Constance's husband's death in 1149, Raynald and Constance eloped. Neither King Baldwin of Jerusalem nor the Patriarch of Antioch approved the marriage. Raynald was considered of common birth and a match ill-suited to the nobility.

Raynald and Constance had one daughter, Agnes, in 1154. There can be no question that the marriage served Raynald well. He increased his wealth and power, and also perhaps, his arrogance. Maybe he was fed up with being looked down upon by the nobility, or maybe he was tired of fawning on social superiors. Whatever the reason, he determined that he would take what would not be freely given him.

In 1156, he sought funds to attack the island of Cyprus, claiming that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus, had reneged on a promise to pay him cash, but seeing

no just cause, the Patriarch of Antioch refused to finance the expedition. Raynald had the Patriarch stripped naked, lacquered in honey, and left atop the citadel in the noonday sun. Raynald got the money. His forces plundered Cyprus.

This iniquitous raid was a mistake. Despite the spoils earned from the looting, it would cause him an amount of humiliation instead of the respect he desperately craved, humiliation that no doubt only consolidated his misanthropy.

Following Raynald's foray into Cyprus, Emperor Manuel I raised a large army to teach Raynald a lesson and entered Syria. Vastly outpowered, Raynald was forced to grovel at the Emperor's throne and beg for his life. In 1159, Raynald was again forced to pay homage to the Emperor and agreed to accept a Greek Patriarch at Antioch. This effectively split the authority of Antioch, giving religious allegiance to the Emperor. Worse still, when Emperor Manuel visited Antioch in 1159 for a meeting with King Baldwin III of Jerusalem, it was Raynald who was ordered out to greet the Emperor and to lead his horse on foot through the city in front of everyone. You can imagine how this made him feel.

He turned his greed toward the Muslims. In 1160, he was captured during a plundering raid against the Syrian and Armenian peasants of Marash. He was imprisoned at Aleppo for seventeen years. This is probably where he honed his hatred for the Muslims. It undoubtedly contributed to the cruelty for which he would later gain notoriety, the torture and misery he'd inflict at the castle of Kerak. Perhaps because Raynald was the stepfather of Maria of Antioch, who the Emperor Manuel married in 1160, or for other reasons unknown to us, Emperor Manuel surprisingly ransomed Raynald for twelve thousand gold dinars, or about a quarter ton of gold. That's \$31,176,924.90 in today's money (calculated in September, 2012). The cost of his freedom to the Christian empire was much higher.

Constance had died in 1163, so Raynald married another rich widow, Stephanie, the widow of Humphrey III of Toron and Miles of Plancy. She was the heiress to the lordship of Oultrejordain, a lordship that included the castles of Montreal and Kerak. These two fortresses south of the Dead Sea controlled the trade routes between Egypt and Damascus. Raynald must have been pleased.

On November 25, 1177, leading the Christian armies alongside the leprous King Baldwin IV, Raynald was victorious over Saladin at the battle of Montgisard. Saladin narrowly escaped. Four years later, perhaps sensing the growing tension between the Christians and the Muslims, fueled with his own sense of power and greed, Raynald began incursions against the Muslim trade caravans passing his fortresses, a violation of truces forged between the Muslims and the Christians.

He took prisoners. It is said he taunted the Muslim merchants and their families and had them thrown over the battlements to fall perilously to their deaths on the rocks below.

Outraged, Saladin demanded reparations, but King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, young and afflicted with wasting leprosy, held out his hands. He could not, he said, control

this "unruly vassal." War resulted in 1182, and Raynald's notoriety began to spread across the Muslim world.

Unsatisfied with villainy on land, Raynald took to piracy upon the Red Sea. His ships were a visible threat to the Muslim Holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Suddenly close, his boasts deprecating the Muslim faith rang out across the Muslim world. The Muslims consolidated behind Saladin. Raynald's pirates were captured, taken to Cairo, and beheaded, but Raynald escaped and disappeared in Moab. Saladin vowed to his followers that he would behead Raynald himself.

Toward the end of 1182, Saladin attacked the castle at Kerak during the wedding of Raynald's stepson, Humphrey IV of Toron, to Isabella of Jerusalem. The siege was raised by Raymond III of Tripoli, a noble who would later vie for the throne of Jerusalem.

Following the siege, Raynald was quiet for a few years, but then, in 1186, he attacked a large Muslim caravan travelling between Cairo and Damascus, taking all the merchants and their families hostage. Up to his usual antics, he desecrated their faith, humiliated and tortured them, and locked away the plunder. He refused audience with each of Saladin's envoys. This violated a four year truce the Christians had signed with Saladin the year before, and Saladin made preparations for revenge.

### **Gerard de Ridefort**

We need also to understand Gerard de Ridefort and why the Templar Grand Master would ultimately back Raynald's terrible argument to march out to meet Saladin on those dusty plains near the Horns of Hattin on July 3, 1187. The whims of destiny are curious; many kingdoms have fallen over pride and simple personal differences. It was a personal difference, perhaps between Gerard de Ridefort and Raymond of Tripoli that would lead to that terrible decision which prevailed at the war council on July 2, a decision that would force the Christians out, away from the defensible springs at Sephoria, and into the desert, with the entire Christian army in tow.

Gerard de Ridefort arrived in Jerusalem sometime in the late 1170's, probably from the lands of modern-day Belgium. He entered the service of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, and in 1179, he attained the rank of Marshal of the Kingdom.

At some point, he had made arrangements to marry an heiress in Tripoli, but Raymond III, the Count of Tripoli, instead gave her to a wealthy merchant who, legend says, offered Raymond as dowry her weight in gold. Jilted, Gerard took the vows of chastity and entered the order. His rise was rapid. By 1183 he had attained the rank of Seneschal. In 1185, following the death of Grand Master Arnold of Torroja, he was elected Grand Master. We will never know if he forgave Raymond of Tripoli for maneuvering his bride to the hand of another, but history records Gerard taking opposing sides to Raymond III of Tripoli at every turn thereafter.

### **Toward the Horns**

Following Raynald's iniquitous plundering and murdering of the laden caravans and the breach of yet another treaty, Saladin began assembling an army from across the Muslim world. By May of 1187, it exceeded thirty thousand men with twelve thousand cavalry. A perfect storm was building. The Muslim factions had united; Raynald's raiding, murderous lechery, and ungodly villainy were a perfect call to arms.

Previously in 1185, King Baldwin IV finally succumbed to leprosy, giving his nephew, King Baldwin V, the crown but not the throne. He was but a boy, and Raymond of Tripoli was appointed regent. In 1186, Baldwin V also died, and the throne of Jerusalem was contested. On one side was Raymond of Tripoli; on the other Guy of Lusignan, husband of Baldwin IV's sister, Sibylla of Jerusalem.

Before his death, Baldwin IV had decreed that Sibylla could only become Queen if her marriage to Guy was annulled, but with the support of Raynald of Chatillon and Gerard de Rideford (against Raymond of Tripoli), Sibylla was crowned queen as the rightful heir, and Guy, as husband, became king.

Thus, when Raynald attacked the Muslim caravan on that fateful day, the Christians had a new King of Jerusalem - one appointed by marriage - whose claim was openly contested. The nobility was in disunity, factions divided the Christian kingdom, and loyalties were uncertain.

In June of 1187, Saladin crossed the Jordan with thirty thousand men. In disarray and disunity, the Christians reluctantly united and rallied at Acre.

On July 2nd Saladin laid siege to Tiberias, a fortress owned by Raymond of Tripoli's wife, Eschiva of Bure, Princess of Galilee. Eschiva was at that time residing there. This was a move intended not on conquest but on deceit. Saladin wanted to goad the Christians away from their defensible position to weaken them in the desert. The plan worked.

At a war counsel on July 2, Raymond III of Tripoli (whose wife it was imperiled at Tiberias) argued against riding out to meet Saladin. He recognized the danger, and smelled a rat. He would even let his wife go. But Raynald and Gerard de Rideford, calling him a coward, prevailed on Guy of Lusignan, the new king, to meet Saladin in battle, to save Tiberias, and conquer the Muslim horde. After all, they had beaten Saladin before with less men. Practically the whole military of the Christian Levant was behind them. So it was, the Christians rode out into the desert on the morning of July 3rd - about twenty thousand of them, with twelve hundred knights from Jerusalem and fifty from Antioch. The Relic of the True Cross, a purported piece of the crucifix to which Christ Himself was nailed, led the way in the procession of the Bishop of Acre. It was fifteen miles to Tiberias.



The Battle of Hattin

Raymond of Tripoli led the vanguard, Guy of Lusignan led the main army, and Raynald and Balian of Ibelin led the rearguard. Almost immediately, the army was under assault by Muslim skirmishers, haranguing and disorienting the army. Not enough to cause retreat or to break ranks mind you, just enough to create confusion. They buzzed around like flies irritating a horse. The sun beat down.

After a fast march, the army reached the springs at Turan around noon. They had traveled six miles. "The hawks of the Frankish infantry and the eagle of their cavalry hovered around the water," a chronicler of the day records Saladin saying.

It would have been wise to lay camp near the water, but said Saladin, "Satan incited Guy to do what ran counter to his purpose." Despite having only mustered eight miles march in a single day, Guy forced the march onward, hoping to surprise Saladin that evening. The long line of men and horses in the noonday heat pressed on toward Tiberias - nine miles to go.

Watching from afar, Saladin secretly sent two wings of his army around the Christians, severing the springs at Turan from their reach. He increased the guerilla incursions to the rear and managed to split the rear guard by slowing them almost to a crawl.

Muslim Chronicler, Baha ad-Din ibn Shaddad, says: "They were closely beset as in a noose, while still marching on as though being driven to the death that they could see before them, convinced of their doom and destruction and themselves aware that the following day they would be visiting their graves."

The army was forced to camp with no water in the middle of a dry plain. During the night, the skirmishes continued. At dawn, or just before, on July 4, 1187, Saladin, whose armies now surrounded the Christians, set fire to the dried grasses upwind. The smoke blistered the Christians, adding to their thirst and weighing uncertainty upon them. Saladin loosed a thousand arrows. They were being attacked from all

sides. The sudden understanding of their predicament was enough. They broke ranks, and headed for the Horns of Hattin, but Saladin repulsed them back.

Count Raymond led two charges to break through the Muslim ranks, to gain access to the Sea of Galilee. Water, they all needed water, but Saladin took the second charge, allowing a small retreat before swooping in behind and isolating Raymond and his knights. Raymond was forced into retreat and separate from the main force. Seeing Raymond severed from the battle and fearing the worst, the infantry disbanded and ran to the Horns of Hattin again. Saladin let them go. The cavalry, now unprotected, fell prey to the torrent of arrows, and the horses fell. The cavalry was forced to fight on foot. Then they too made for the Horns of Hattin. Trapped on the hillside, the Crusaders were completely surrounded.

What happened next was recorded by Ibn al-Athir from Al-Afdal, Saladin's son, who was at his father's side during the battle: "When the king of the Franks [Guy] was on the hill with that band, they made a formidable charge against the Muslims facing them, so that they drove them back to my father [Saladin]. I looked toward him and he was overcome by grief and his complexion pale. He took hold of his beard and advanced, crying out 'Give the lie to the Devil!'"

The Muslims rallied, returned to the fight, and climbed the hill. "When I saw that the Franks withdrew, pursued by the Muslims, I shouted for joy, 'We have beaten them!' But the Franks rallied and charged again like the first time and drove the Muslims back to my father.

He acted as he had done on the first occasion and the Muslims turned upon the Franks and drove them back to the hill. I again shouted, 'We have beaten them!' But my father rounded on me and said, 'Be quiet! We have not beaten them until that tent [Guy] falls.' As he was speaking to me, the tent fell. The sultan dismounted, prostrated himself in thanks to God Almighty and wept for joy."

The prisoners were assembled for ransom. Guy of Lusignan and Raynald of Chatillon were taken to Saladin's tent. The Chronicler Imad ad-Din al-Isfahani records what happened next: "Saladin invited the king [Guy] to sit beside him, and when Arnat [Raynald] entered in his turn, he seated himself next to his king and [Saladin] reminded him of his misdeeds. "How many times have you sworn an oath and violated it? How many times have you signed agreements you have never respected?"

Raynald answered through a translator: 'Kings have always acted thus. I did nothing more.'

During this time, King Guy was gasping with thirst, his head dangling as though drunk, his face betraying great fright. Saladin spoke reassuring words to him, had cold water brought, and offered it to him.

The king drank, then handed what remained to Raynald, who slaked his thirst in turn. The sultan then said to Guy: 'You did not ask permission before giving him

water. I am therefore not obliged to grant him mercy.'

After pronouncing these words, the sultan smiled, mounted his horse, and rode off, leaving the captives in terror. He supervised the return of the troops, and then came back to his tent.

He ordered Raynald brought there, then advanced before him, sword in hand, and struck him between the neck and the shoulder-blade. When Raynald fell, he cut off his head and dragged the body by its feet to the king, who began to tremble. Seeing him thus upset, Saladin said to him in a reassuring tone: 'It is not the wont of kings to kill kings; but that man had transgressed all bounds, and therefore did I treat him thus. This man was killed only because of his maleficence and perfidy.'"

The severity of this loss is best synopsisized by the following facts. Most of the Christian army from across the Levant fell that day. The Knights present were summarily executed. The True Cross was nailed upside down and taken to Damascus. Two days later, the fortress at Tiberias fell. By mid-September; Acre, Nablus, Jaffa, Toron, Sidon, Beirut, and Ascalon had all fallen. On October 2, Jerusalem fell, too.

When word of the sudden reversal reached Rome, the Chronicler Ernoul records that the news of the defeat caused Pope Urban III to die of shock. Pope Gregory VIII, ascending shortly thereafter, issued the papal bull *Audita tremendi*, authorizing the Third Crusade. In England and France, the Saladin tith was enacted, and all peoples were taxed additionally to fund the endeavor. This led to much unpopularity of and uprisings against the nobility there.


Despite the efforts of other Knights Templar and King Richard I the Lionheart, the Christians were unable to recapture Jerusalem. The Third Crusade ended in 1192, and the spires of Jerusalem set under the pale blade of the crescent moon.


 Kingdom of Jerusalem


 Knights Templar

 Knights Hospitaller


 Order of Saint Lazarus


 Principality of Antioch

 Guy of Lusignan


 Raymond III of Tripoli

 Balian of Ibelin

 Gerard de Rideford

 Raynald of Chatillon

Vs.


 Ayyubids


 Saladin

 Gokbori

Vs.

 Al-Muzaffar Umar

 Al-Adil I

 Al-Afdal ibn  
Salah ad-Din

15,000 infantry  
1,200 knights  
500 mercenaries } 20,000 men Vs. 30,000 men  
(including 12,000 cavalry)

We should never forget that the actions of just one man can cause great changes in the world - for good or ill. As modern Knights of the Temple, we must remember to temper ambition and greed beneath the sword of virtue, to remain a force of positive change in the world. We must be unafraid in all our interactions, look the world in the eye, and keep it with a wink. With all the luxury of the modern age, what are you going to do today to make someone else's life better?

Perhaps it's as simple as a smile.

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