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This image depicts the place where a decisive battle took place in 1187 between the forces of Saladin and the Crusader states of the Levant. In the background is the "Sea of Galilee." Mid-image are twin hills (from an extinct volcano) known as the "Horns of Hattin." The fighting took place in summer when it was extremely hot. The thirsty crusading forces were unable to reach the in-sight area of fresh water since Saladin's troops had blocked their access. Avram Graicer took this photograph on November 12, 2011. Click on the image for a full-page view. License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

It made little sense for the Kingdom of Jerusalem's army to march from Saffuriyah to Tiberias, a distance of 16 miles (26 kilometers), on a very hot summer day. Exposing men to extreme thirst, in an arid land, was tantamount to suicide.

Saladin must have smiled as he watched the opposition walk into his trap.

From Tiberias, pictured as it appears today, Guy's thirsty army marched to the springs of Turan. Thereafter, their left flank was encircled by Saladin. Their rearguard was ferociously attacked.

Struggling uphill to Maskana, the Franks (according to an account by Matthew Paris, written in the 13th century), halted on Raymond's advice. Short of water, and surrounded, they would spend the night. For many, it would be their last night.

The following morning, July 4th, Saladin held back his attack until the heat of the day was most intense. It was difficult for dehydrated men - who could see but not reach the nearby lake - to think straight or fight wisely.

Foot soldiers rushed ahead, with their axes and maces, but were crushed by Muslim swords and lances. Infused with a courage born of despair, they fought on, but their efforts were futile.

Succumbing to thirst, some of Guy's infantry took refuge on nearby hills known as the Horns of Hattin. His unprotected cavalry, although they fought bravely, were mostly at the mercy of Saladin's mounted archers. Superior numbers of Muslims prevented the Franks from effectively breaking out of the encirclement. The Christian forces appeared doomed.

Raymond of Tripoli led a charge, breaking through the Muslim line, but could not rejoin his fellow Kingdom fighters when Saladin's men closed ranks. He escaped when one of Saladin's lieutenants recognized him.

Raymond rode his horse back to Tripoli "but died of rage and grief soon afterward." (Karen Armstrong, Holy War, page 253.)

Ibn al-Athir takes us to the scene immediately after Raymond's exit:

After the count's departure [meaning Raymond], the Franj were on the point of capitulating. The Muslims had set fire to the dry grass, and the wind was blowing the smoke into the eyes of the knights.

Assailed by thirst, flames, and smoke, by the summer heat and the fires of combat, the Franj were unable to go on. But they believed they could avoid death only by confronting it.

They launched attacks so violent that the Muslims were about to give way. Nevertheless, with each assault the Franj suffered heavy losses and their numbers diminished.

The Muslims gained possession of the True Cross. For the Franj, this was the heaviest of losses, for it was on this cross, they claim, that the Messiah, peace be upon him, was crucified. (Quoted in *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, page 192.)

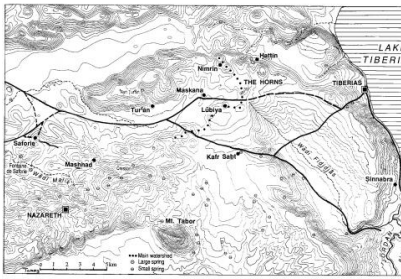
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

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Media Stream



Arid Land - Hattin Area Map

Map image online, courtesy Cornell University.

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Tiberias

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Springs of Turan - Thirsty Soldiers

Image, described above, online courtesy Web Gallery of Art.

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Matthew Paris - Medieval Chronicler

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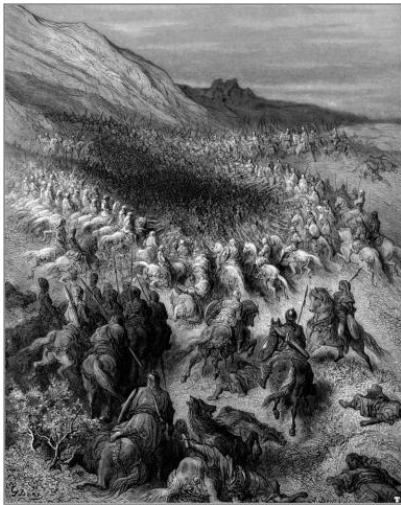
Muslim Swords and Lances

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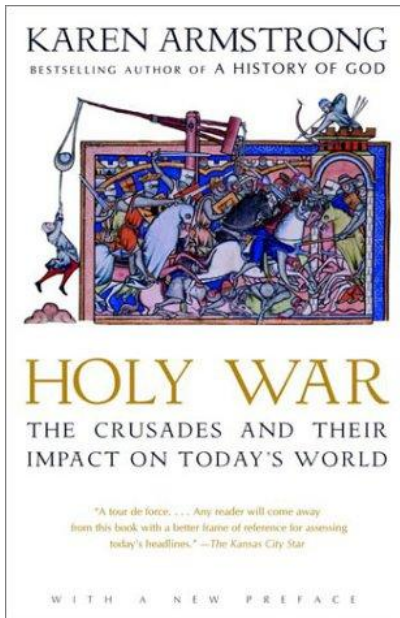
Christian Forces at the Horns of Hattin

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Holy War - by Karen Armstrong

Book-cover image online, courtesy Random House and Google Books.

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Gaining Possession of the Holy Cross

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