

## **Battle of Hattin**

1170 AD

Battle of Hattin (1187 AD)

In 1170 AD a new, powerful leader rose to lead the Muslim counterattack. For a while Saladin, as he was known in the West, maintained an uneasy peace with the crusaders. However a series of provocations by the crusaders broke the truce and finally forced his hand. He gathered a large army and laid siege to Tiberias. The Crusaders went for the bait and marched to the rescue. Their line of march took them across a desert where the heavily armored knights suffered terribly in the summer heat. Saladin sent soldiers to harass them during the march, slowing their advance to a crawl. The army was dying of thirst when they approached Lake Tiberias only to find Saladin's army blocking their path.

In the battle that followed the crusader army was destroyed. Raymond of Tripoli was the only commander to escape, the other the crusader leaders were killed or captured. Saladin's forces also capture a treasured holy relic "the True Cross" The crusader kingdoms could not survive the loss of so many soldiers. Saladin was able to follow up this victory by capturing many lightly defended castles and cities, including Jerusalem. This led to more crusades. The famous third crusade pitted Richard the Lionhearted against Saladin, but the Battle of Hattin had permanently turned the momentum against the crusaders.

Battle 1: The Muslims were eager for battle and immediately launched charges with their light cavalry. The Bedouins on the left wing were particularly aggressive. They followed this with a barrage of arrows that darkened the sky and inflicted many casualties. It soon became clear that a static defense was hopeless, so the crusaders sent their cavalry out to the flanks to attempt a breakout. Saladin saw this and he led an all out attack on the weakened center while ordering his reserves to support the flanks. As the center buckled the knights found their escape routes blocked. Only the Knights Templar were about to slip out of the trap, although the Grand Master Templar and all the crusader commanders were captured.

Battle 2: Early in this battle the powerful Templars were able to break through the Muslim lines and threatened to turn the flank. On the other side of the battle things didn't go as well for the crusaders. Raymond of Tripoli was captured, demoralizing the army. In the center al-Afdal, Saladin's son, led an effective attack that broke through the crusader lines in several places. The knights fell back to defend King Guy of Jerusalem and the True Cross. The Bedouin light cavalry seemed to be everywhere, and they moved to contain the rampaging Templars. The attack in the center finally succeeded in capturing the True Cross but at a high cost 'al-Sadfal was killed by his own men in a tragic case of mistaken identity. Suddenly it was every man for himself as the crusader commanders desperately tried to escape. After a spirited pursuit King Guy was captured. Only the Grand Master Templar was able to ride to safety but as he left the battlefield he was challenged by Taqi al-Din. The arrogant Grand Master accepted the challenge and was killed in personal combat with Saladin's lieutenant. The rout was complete.