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## Water, Fire, and Terrain: Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's Tactical Superiority and the Collapse of the Crusader Army at the Battle of Hittin

### Abstract

This study aims to systematically analyze the Battle of Hittin, which took place near Lake Tiberias on July 3-4, 1187, within the framework of pre-war strategic preparations, the military development of the battle, and Şalāh al-Dīn's tactical superiority. Methodologically, the research employs a comprehensive comparative analysis of contemporary Islamic chronicles -including the works of Ibn Shaddād, İmād al-Dīn al-İşfahānī, and Ibn al-Athīr- alongside primary Crusader sources to provide a balanced historical perspective. The breaking of the truce by Reynald de Châtillon's plundering of a Muslim caravan in 1186 provided Şalāh al-Dīn with the justification to launch a decisive military campaign (Holt, 1986). By organizing an extensive call for jihad, Şalāh al-Dīn unified forces from Mosul, al-Jazīra, Erbil, Egypt, and Bilad al-Sham. His strategic deception of besieging Tiberias successfully lured the Crusaders from their secure positions at Şaffūriyya into a logistical trap. During the engagement, Şalāh al-Dīn exploited the scorching July heat and controlled water sources to exhaust the enemy. Furthermore, Gökböri's scorched-earth tactics and continuous harassment attacks shattered Crusader morale. Poor strategic leadership, internal dissent, and Raymond's retreat ultimately led to the Crusader collapse. This victory fundamentally altered the Levant's geopolitical landscape, leading to Jerusalem's liberation and ending Crusader hegemony.

**Keywords:** Battle of Hittin, Şalāh al-Dīn, Crusaders, Kingdom of Jerusalem, Military Strategy.

## Su, Ateş ve Arazi: Hittin Savaşı'nda Selâhaddīn-i Eyyübî'nin Taktik Üstünlüğü ve Haçlı Ordusunun Çöküşü

### Öz

Bu çalışma, 3-4 Temmuz 1187 tarihlerinde Taberiye Gölü yakınlarında gerçekleşen Hittin Savaşı'nı; savaş öncesi stratejik hazırlıklar, muharebenin gelişimi ve Selâhaddīn Eyyübî'nin taktiksel üstünlüğü çerçevesinde sistematik olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Yöntem olarak araştırma, İbn Şeddād, İmâdüddīn el-İşfahânî ve İbnü'l-Esir gibi dönemin İslâm kronikleri ile temel Haçlı kaynaklarının karşılaştırmalı analizini sunmaktadır. Reynald de Châtillon'un 1186 yılında bir Müslüman kervanını yağmalayarak ateşkesi bozması, Selâhaddīn'e kapsamlı bir askerî harekât başlatması için gerekli meşruiyeti sağlamıştır. Geniş çaplı bir cihat çağrısı düzenleyen Selâhaddīn; Musul, el-Cezîre, Erbil, Mısır ve Bilâdüşşâm'dan gelen kuvvetleri tek bir çatı altında birleştirmiştir. Taberiye'yi kuşatarak uyguladığı yanıltma taktiği, Haçlıları Şaffūriyya'daki güvenli mevzilerinden lojistik bir tuzağa çekmeyi başarmıştır. Çarpışmalar sırasında Selâhaddīn, Temmuz sıcağından ve su kaynaklarının kontrolünden faydalanarak düşman ordusunu bitkin düşürmüştür. Ayrıca Gökböri'nin bitki örtüsünü ateşe verme taktiği ve kesintisiz yıpratma saldırıları Haçlı moralini tamamen çökertmiştir. Stratejik liderlik hataları, iç çekişmeler ve Raymond'un geri çekilmesi Haçlıların nihai bozgununa yol açmıştır. Bu zafer, Levant bölgesinin jeopolitik manzarasını kökten değiştirerek Kudüs'ün fethine zemin hazırlamış ve bölgedeki Haçlı hegemonyasını sarsmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hittin Savaşı, Selâhaddīn, Haçlılar, Kudüs Krallığı, Askerî Strateji.

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## **1. Introduction**

The Crusades constitute one of the most complex and multidimensional events in medieval history. This process, which began with Pope Urban II's call at Clermont in 1095, initiated a struggle between Western Christendom and the Islamic world that would last two centuries. The capture of Jerusalem in 1099 as a result of the success of the First Crusade and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem led to the formation of a new political and military balance in the region. However, this balance gradually began to change against the Crusaders with the unification movement that began in the Muslim world during the periods of 'Imād al-Dīn Zengī and Nūr al-Dīn Zengī.

Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's rise to power in Egypt in 1169 and his subsequent establishment of the Ayyubid State marked a new era in the Crusader-Muslim struggle. Şalāḥ al-Dīn's unification of Egyptian and Syrian territories under a single authority strategically besieged the Kingdom of Jerusalem and ended the Crusaders' military superiority. During this period, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was experiencing a serious internal crisis due to King Baldwin IV's leprosy, the weak leadership of his successors, and political intrigues around the court. Particularly, the conflicts between Count Raymond of Tripoli and the groups represented by Guy de Lusignan and Reynald de Châtillon significantly weakened the kingdom's military and political effectiveness.

The peace treaty signed between Şalāḥ al-Dīn and the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the mid-1180s provided temporary stability in the region, but the aggressive policies of Reynald de Châtillon, lord of Kerak-Shawbak, changed this situation. Châtillon's plundering of a Muslim caravan in 1186 and his refusal to release the prisoners provided Şalāḥ al-Dīn with a legitimate justification to launch a comprehensive military campaign against the Crusaders. This development constituted the beginning of the process leading to the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn.

The battle that took place on July 3-4, 1187, at the hills of Ḥiṭṭīn near Lake Tiberias is considered one of the most important turning points in medieval military history. In this battle, the Islamic army under the command of Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī inflicted a complete defeat on the Crusader army led by King Guy de Lusignan of Jerusalem. Following the victory, the city of Jerusalem fell into Muslim hands within three months, and the dominance of the Crusader States in the region was shaken. The Victory of Ḥiṭṭīn was not merely a military success but also presented an example of effective use of strategic planning, tactical superiority, and psychological warfare methods.

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the Victory of Ḥiṭṭīn in terms of military genius and leadership by evaluating Şalāḥ al-Dīn's ability to use geographical-climatic advantages as a strategic tool, his tactic of physically and psychologically exhausting the enemy by controlling water sources, and integrating psychological warfare elements within an integrated military strategy. Moreover, the article systematically reveals the interaction of factors effective in winning the battle, demonstrating how geography, climate, logistics, and morale factors formed a strategic whole in medieval military history. The main objective of this article is to subject the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn to systematic analysis within the framework of pre-war strategic preparations, the development of the battle, and Şalāḥ al-Dīn's tactical superiority. The study aims to evaluate the battle from a multidimensional perspective by using the comparative analysis method of contemporary Islamic chronicles such as Ibn Shaddād, 'Imād al-Dīn al-Işfahānī, and Ibn al-Athīr, along with Crusader sources.

## 2. Literature

The Battle of Hittin has received considerable scholarly attention as a pivotal moment in Crusader-Muslim relations. Contemporary Islamic chronicles, particularly Ibn Shaddād's *al-Nawādir al-sultāniyya*, 'Imād al-Dīn al-İşfahānī's *al-Fatḥ al-qussī*, and Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*, provide detailed eyewitness accounts of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's military campaigns. Western sources, including the *Ernoul Chronicle* and the *Libellus de Expugnatione Terrae Sanctae per Saladinum* (hereafter referred to as *Libellus*)—which is examined in this study through Gürcan's (2025) critical translation and analysis—offer valuable counter-perspectives. Modern historiography has emphasized the battle's strategic significance, with Holt (1986) situating it within broader Crusader state dynamics, while Lyons and Jackson (1984) analyzed Şalāḥ al-Dīn's political acumen. Maalouf (1983) contributed a narrative analysis from the 'Arab perspective,' particularly highlighting the psychological impact of environmental warfare. Kedar (1992) revisited tactical aspects, and Phillips (2019) explored both military and legendary dimensions. Turkish scholarship, notably Şeşen (1990; 2024) and Polat (2015), has examined the specific composition of the Ayyubid army; similarly, Gürcan (2025) has recently analyzed the Ayyubid military structure and strategy through a comparative reading of sources. Recent studies by Barber (2021) and Hoch (2006) have investigated Crusader decision-making failures. However, a systematic analysis integrating geographical advantages, water control strategies, and psychological warfare within Şalāḥ al-Dīn's comprehensive military framework remains underexplored.

## 3. Methods

This study employs a comparative historical analysis methodology, systematically examining primary sources from both Islamic and Crusader perspectives to reconstruct the Battle of Hittin. The research utilizes critical textual analysis of contemporary Arabic chronicles—specifically Ibn Shaddād's *al-Nawādir al-sultāniyya*, 'Imād al-Dīn al-İşfahānī's *al-Fatḥ al-qussī fī al-fatḥ al-qudsī*, and Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*—alongside Latin sources including the *Ernoul Chronicle* and *Anonymous Libellus*. Cross-referencing these accounts enables identification of convergent narratives and resolution of discrepancies. The study applies military historical methodology to analyze strategic decision-making, tactical deployments, and geographical factors. Particular attention is paid to evaluating Şalāḥ al-Dīn's use of terrain, water sources, and climatic conditions as force multipliers. The research framework integrates pre-battle preparations, battle development phases, and post-battle consequences. Secondary literature is synthesized to contextualize findings within broader Crusader-Ayyubid conflict dynamics. This multidimensional approach facilitates comprehensive understanding of how strategic planning, tactical execution, and psychological warfare contributed to the Crusader defeat.

## 4. Pre-War Preparations and Strategic Planning

Reynald de Châtillon's violation of the treaty constituted a justification that legitimized Şalāḥ al-Dīn's launch of military operations against the Crusaders (Holt, 1986, pp. 53–55). He sent written declarations to all emirs calling them to participate in jihad (Şeşen, 2024, p. 112). This invitation was the first comprehensive call for jihad directed at the emirs under his administration. He requested the emirates in Mosul, al-Jazīra, Erbil, Egypt, and Damascus to make preparations and participate in jihad. After Şalāḥ al-Dīn completed his preparations, he departed from Damascus at the end of Muḥarram 583 and crossed to Ra's al-Mā', where the

Syrian army joined him (al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 42; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 143; Ibn al-‘Adīm, 1996, p. 407). When Şalāḥ al-Dīn received news that the lord of Kerak would attack the pilgrimage caravan, he left his son al-Malik al-Afḍal ‘Alī in the region to await the arrival of other forces, while he himself advanced toward Buşrā with his cavalry and camped near Qaşr Şalāma.

After the pilgrimage caravan returned home without any incident, the Sultan first gathered his military forces and moved toward Kerak. While conducting the siege, he divided his army into detachments and carried out plundering operations in the vicinity of Kerak and Shawbak (Şeşen, 2009, p. 338; Demirkent, 1997, p. 135). During this process, the trees and crops in the region were also destroyed (Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 2, p. 276; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 143; Ibn Wāşil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 186; Abū I-Faraj, 1999, vol. 2, p. 440). Subsequently, Şalāḥ al-Dīn met the soldiers coming from Egypt at Qaryatayn and gave them instructions to plunder the lands of Kerak-Shawbak (al-İşfahānī, 1965, p. 69; Ibn al-Athīr, 2016, vol. 9, p. 496). The Sultan resided in the aforementioned area with his military units for approximately sixty days. Meanwhile, a large force had gathered with al-Afḍal, who was stationed at Ra’s al-Mā’, but the Aleppo soldiers had not yet joined the army as they were occupied with the Antioch Crusaders. While these developments were taking place in Kerak, the Crusaders in the Kingdom of Jerusalem could not come to aid due to al-Afḍal's presence, and Reynald de Châtillon could not take any action as he was under siege. This situation allowed the Islamic army to move as it wished in the region.

Şalāḥ al-Dīn sent Taqī al-Dīn ‘Umar to enemy territories to intimidate the Crusaders, demonstrating with this move that the region was not neglected. During the same period, Gökböri and Badr al-Dīn Dildirim also joined the headquarters with their own forces (Ibn Wāşil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 187). On the other hand, Şalāḥ al-Dīn instructed al-Afḍal to plunder the vicinity of Acre. At this time, Count Raymond III of Tripoli had sought refuge with Şalāḥ al-Dīn due to disagreements among the Crusaders, and an alliance was established between them (Bundārī, 2004, p. 365; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 144). Upon this development, Gerard de Ridefort, master of the Knights Templar, decided to go to Raymond with his knights. When al-Afḍal informed him that he would pass through Raymond's lands, the count gave him permission and warned the knights in the region. In May 1187, the Damascus vanguard encountered Crusader knights near Şaffūriyya, and as a result of fierce fighting, the Crusaders suffered a heavy defeat (al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 43; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 144; Ibn Wāşil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 187; Ibn al-‘Adīm, 1996, p. 407).

Following the victory achieved, Şalāḥ al-Dīn ended the siege of Kerak and moved to the vicinity of Tiberias, establishing camp at Ashterā with al-Afḍal's forces (Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 277; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 144; Ibn Wāşil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 187). While he was establishing his camp at Ashterā, provincial forces sent from Mosul, Sinjar, Āmid, Edessa, Ḥarrān, Hakkāri, Jazīra, Ḥişn Kayfā, Aleppo, Egypt, and Nablus also arrived and joined the main army (al-İşfahānī, 1965, p. 69; Ibn al-Athīr, 2016, vol. 9, p. 496). Taqī al-Dīn, who was tasked with watching the Antioch area, made an agreement with Count Raymond of Tripoli and then joined Şalāḥ al-Dīn's headquarters with soldiers from Mardin and Mosul. The army, consisting of cavalry and infantry, was inspected. Şalāḥ al-Dīn organized his army into right wing, left wing, center, vanguard, and rearguard, determined each emir's duty station, and departed from Ashterā to establish a new headquarters in the Ukhuwāna region near Tiberias (Ibn al-Athīr,

2003, vol. 10, p. 144; Ibn Wāṣil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, pp. 187–188; al-İṣfahānī, 2004, p. 46). According to the comparative analysis by Gürcan regarding the Ayyubid army and strategy at the Battle of Hattin, while the *Libellus* records the total Ayyubid force as 30,000—including 10,000 mounted archers—Ibn al-Athīr refers to only 12,000 regular troops. The exaggerated figures reaching up to 80,000 found in Crusader sources reflect the propagandistic tendencies of the era and the conflicting perspectives of the opposing sides (Gürcan, 2025, pp. 3-4).

When the Crusaders received news that Şalāḥ al-Dīn had assembled his army, they first resolved the disagreement between Raymond III and King Guy. The defeat at Şaffūriyya left a deep impact on Raymond, and the Crusader leaders blamed him for this defeat. Raymond, unable to endure this situation, appeared before the king and offered his allegiance, thus achieving unity among the Crusaders. Upon this development, King Guy sent word to all Crusader forces between Darum and Antioch, requesting that they join him with their armies. The Crusader army advanced from Acre toward Şaffūriyya and positioned themselves at Şaffūriyya to protect the army (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 145; al-İṣfahānī, 2004, p. 48; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 278; Ibn Wāṣil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 189). Intelligence was received that the Crusader forces had united and were moving against the Islamic army, and Şalāḥ al-Dīn, realizing that this situation he had long hoped for had come to him, wanted to evaluate this strategic opportunity. However, before entering this critical struggle, it was essential for him to prepare his military units for battle. Accordingly, a war council was organized, and various opinions were presented. Ultimately, it was decided to engage in a pitched battle with the enemy.

The Crusader forces had gathered at Şaffūriyya, awaiting Şalāḥ al-Dīn's attack. In July 1187, Şalāḥ al-Dīn set out with his army from Ukhuwāna, leaving their baggage behind. First, he reached Lake Tiberias, then continued his journey, left the city behind, and camped in the plain area known as Kafr/Sabt located on the mountains to its west. With this strategic maneuver aimed at forcing the Crusader forces into a pitched battle, Şalāḥ al-Dīn tried to harass them through his archers, but the Crusaders did not attempt to fight and did not leave their position. Sensing that the enemy was reluctant, the Sultan made a strategic move and first ordered his troops to form a solid line in front of the enemy. The next day, taking sufficient forces, he besieged Tiberias where Count Raymond of Tripoli's wife was located. His aim was to draw the Crusaders out of their secure positions. After an hour of intense assault, he captured the city of Tiberias. After the defenders took refuge in the inner citadel, they requested support from the Crusader forces through Countess Eschiva. When the calls for help reached the Crusader headquarters, after a long debate among themselves, the counts gave the order for the army to move immediately.

The internal conflict regarding the choice of battlefield is vividly recounted in the *Libellus*. Count Raymond of Tripoli vehemently advised against marching across the arid terrain, stating, 'We should not abandon water and provisions to lead such a multitude to death by thirst and scorching heat in the wilderness' (Gürcan, 2025, p. 20). However, his strategic counsel was dismissed by the King and the Grand Master of the Templars, who accused him of treachery, metaphorically stating he was 'still hiding under a wolf's skin.' This decision to abandon the secure water sources at Şaffūriyya marked the beginning of the tactical collapse (Gürcan, 2025, p. 48).

## **5. Development of the Battle and Critical Stages**

When Şalāḥ al-Dīn, who had besieged Tiberias, received intelligence that the Crusader forces had moved, he made the following assessment: "What was desired has been achieved (al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 49; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 279; Şeşen, 2024, pp. 113–114)... If these who are coming are defeated, Tiberias and the entire coast will be left undefended. No obstacle will remain for conquest." For his aim was to draw the Crusader forces out of Şaffūriyya by besieging Tiberias. Having obtained what he desired, after these words, Şalāḥ al-Dīn made a strategic move and, after stationing a certain number of soldiers in Tiberias to encircle the inner citadel, resumed command of his main forces. The soldiers of both sides spent the night fully equipped, with their weapons ready (Abū l-Faraj, 1999, vol. 2, p. 442). It is narrated in detail that the Islamic army successfully prevented the enemy's access to water sources and conducted comprehensive preparations throughout the night hours (Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 280).

On Friday morning (24 Rabī' al-Ākhir/July 3), Muslim forces were engaged in blocking activities against the Crusader troops who desired to advance. The fighting in the Lubyā region continued until sunset (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 145; Bundārī, 2004, p. 373; al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 49; Ibn Wāşil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 189; Abū l-Faraj, 1999, vol. 2, p. 442). The Crusader soldiers, who were partially surrounded, could not obtain water. Due to the position of Lake Tiberias, their ability to move in that direction was restricted. Attempts to reach the lake were unsuccessful. With extreme heat and exhaustion added, the enemy forces were worn down. Both armies spent the night vigilantly, maintaining their positions. Şalāḥ al-Dīn, constantly monitoring the Crusaders' condition, clearly saw that their morale and order had deteriorated. Preparations were made for the next day, with four hundred sacks of arrows distributed and seventy camel loads of arrows placed at various points for use when needed (Bundārī, 2004, p. 374; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 146).

The Crusaders were fighting in a formation consisting of cavalry in the center and infantry around them. Although they had used this strategy successfully many times before, this time it was not having the expected effect. On Saturday morning, July 4, 1187, they tried to advance, but the Islamic forces had left them no room to maneuver (Bundārī, 2004, p. 374; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 146; Ibn Wāşil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, p. 190; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 282). Arrow volleys were also hindering their movements. The enemy, exhausted from lack of water, was resisting and struggling to break through the Islamic lines to reach Tiberias. Şalāḥ al-Dīn was moving among his soldiers with great enthusiasm, encouraging them. Against the effective response of the Islamic forces, the Crusaders were suffering serious casualties with each attempt. One of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's mamluks single-handedly charged into the enemy line and fought valiantly. Soon he was surrounded and fell as a martyr. This incident, mistaking him for one of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's sons, aroused the Muslims and caused them to collectively charge. The continuous arrow volleys had already worn them down, and they had suffered serious losses in terms of horses and soldiers. Following Gökböri's strategy, the surrounding dry grass was set on fire, and the spreading smoke greatly restricted the Crusader army's visibility and mobility (al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 50; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 147; Şeşen, 2024, p. 114). With heat and thirst combined with fire and smoke, the army's resistance completely collapsed. The psychological and physical impact of this tactical move is narrated differently in the opposing sources, creating a complete picture only when synthesized. While Islamic chronicles such as

Ibn al-Athīr glorify the setting of fires as a brilliant calculated maneuver to break the enemy's formation, the *Libellus* offers a visceral internal perspective of this catastrophe from the victim's viewpoint. The Latin author vividly recounts that the Crusaders were not only suffocated by the smoke but were effectively 'blinded' and paralyzed, contrasting with the triumphant narrative of al-İşfahānī who depicted these events as the manifest aid of divine providence (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 147; al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 50; Gürcan, 2025, pp. 20-21).

Every breakthrough attempt they made resulted in heavy casualties against the Crusaders. Thereupon, the Crusaders reorganized their battle formation. The cavalry units and heavy equipment were concentrated in the center; the center, surrounded by infantry, was put into a square or rectangular formation. The army took defensive formation in three columns and began to resist in this manner (Anonymous Libellus, 2019, pp. 149–151; Ibn al-Athīr, 2016, vol. 9, pp. 498–499; Smail, 1995, p. 196; Phillips, 2019, pp. 179–180; Barber, 2021, p. 428; Kedar, 1992, pp. 202–203). Count Raymond III, along with a group of knights including Reynald de Sidon and Balian d'Ibelin, realizing that definitive defeat was inevitable and that they could not survive if they continued fighting, managed to charge and break through the siege line and flee (Ernoul, 2019, pp. 140–142; Anonymous Libellus, 2019, pp. 153–155; al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 79; Runciman, 2008, vol. 2, p. 384; Phillips, 2019, p. 181; Hoch, 2006, p. 559). This event occurred at the wing where Taqī al-Dīn was positioned (Bundārī, 2004, pp. 375–376; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 147; al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 50; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 283). The Ayyubid right wing, commanded by Taqī al-Dīn 'Umar, played a decisive role by seizing control of the only available water source, thereby sealing the physical exhaustion of the Crusader forces. Furthermore, the decision to open a corridor for Count Raymond's escape was not a defensive failure, but a calculated tactical maneuver designed to fracture the enemy's cohesion and accelerate their inevitable collapse (Can, 2024, p. 874).

A decisive moment of the battle occurred when the discipline of the infantry completely disintegrated under the pressure of thirst. According to the *Libellus*, when the King and bishops ordered the infantry to descend from the hill they had fled to and defend the True Cross, they refused, crying out: "We are not coming. Because we are dying of thirst and cannot fight" (Gürcan, 2025, p. 22). This insubordination left the cavalry exposed and allowed the Ayyubid forces to isolate the King's position.

King Guy, together with his military forces and knight corps, made a strategic withdrawal to the hill of Ḥiṭṭīn for defensive purposes. He decided to continue the struggle there. Some loyal knights in his retinue quickly erected the king's red tent to show that they had not yet accepted defeat. To prevent the Crusaders from strengthening their positions by erecting more tents, Muslim forces charged with cavalry units (al-İşfahānī, 2004, p. 80; Ibn Shaddād, 2021, p. 104; Nicholson, 2004, p. 49; Phillips, 2019, p. 182; Barber, 2021, p. 428; Hoch, 2006, p. 560; Melville & Lyons, 1992, p. 211). In response to this move, King Guy launched an unexpected counterattack, putting Şalāḥ al-Dīn in a difficult situation. During this clash, the knights had undertaken the duty of protecting both themselves and their sovereign.

Al-Afḍal, Şalāḥ al-Dīn's son who was an eyewitness to this fighting, recounts his experiences as follows: The king and his cavalry positioned themselves on the hill and attacked the Muslim forces so violently that they managed to push them back to the point where Şalāḥ al-Dīn was located. Şalāḥ al-Dīn encouraged his soldiers, and thereupon the Muslims charged again and took the hill. However, the Crusaders launched a second attack. Şalāḥ al-Dīn responded with

the same determination, and the Muslims again gained the upper hand. When the tent collapsed shortly afterward, Şalāḥ al-Dīn dismounted from his horse and prostrated himself in gratitude. During one of the attacks in which the Crusaders tried to penetrate the Muslim defense line, the Bishop of Acre perished, and the True Cross came under the control of the Islamic army. The capture of the True Cross by Saladin's forces caused a profound psychological collapse among the Crusaders, depicted in the *Libellus* as a theological catastrophe. The chronicler mourns this loss with the words, 'The tree of life has been taken from my hand... Woe to us, who have lost our armor due to our sins' (Gürçan, 2025, pp. 23-24). This primary account illustrates that for the Latin East, the defeat at Ḥiṭṭīn was not merely military but signified the withdrawal of divine favor. Many warriors lost their lives during the clashes. Contemporary Muslim historians narrate that when they failed in the second breakthrough attempt, the king and his knights, suffering from extreme thirst, dismounted from their horses and threw themselves on the ground, whereupon Muslims climbing the hill toppled the sovereign's tent and captured those inside (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 147; Bundārī, 2004, p. 376; Ibn Wāṣil, 1953–1960, vol. 2, pp. 190–191; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 284). Thus, the army of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Şalāḥ al-Dīn, its leadership cadre was neutralized, and the battle ended with the Muslims' decisive victory (Anonymous *Libellus*, 2019, pp. 155–157; al-Işfahānī, 2004, p. 80; Ibn Shaddād, 2021, p. 104; Phillips, 1999, p. 125).

## **6. Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's Tactical Superiority**

The tactical superiority that Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī displayed at Ḥiṭṭīn constitutes one of the most remarkable examples of medieval military history. Every stage of the battle reveals Şalāḥ al-Dīn's military genius and multidimensional strategic planning. This tactical superiority was not limited merely to momentary decisions on the battlefield but took shape within a comprehensive military strategy framework that began with pre-war preparations, continued throughout the battle, and even sustained its effect after the war.

One of the most effective tactics employed by Şalāḥ al-Dīn was the deception maneuver he carried out by besieging Tiberias. This classic "false target" strategy forced the Crusaders to leave their secure position at Şaffūriyya, which was close to water sources (al-Işfahānī, 2004, p. 49; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 279; Şeşen, 2024, pp. 113–114). According to Ibn Khaldūn's account, Şalāḥ al-Dīn first marched on Tiberias and captured the city, thus putting the Crusader army in a difficult position (Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Iḥbār*, vol. 5, p. 357). Guy de Lusignan's coming to Tiberias' aid with a force of approximately fifty thousand men is actually an indicator of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's plan achieving success. To understand the genius of this maneuver, it is necessary to consider the military strategies of the period. Şaffūriyya was a position rich in water resources, suitable for defense, and capable of meeting the logistical needs of the Crusader army. Şalāḥ al-Dīn, by threatening Tiberias where Count Raymond of Tripoli's wife was located, forced the Crusader leaders to make an emotional decision. The wife of Count Raymond's calls for help led to long debates at the Crusader headquarters, and ultimately the decision was made for the army to move immediately. Şalāḥ al-Dīn's assessment of this situation is quite revealing: "What was desired has been achieved (al-Işfahānī, 2004, p. 49; Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 279; Şeşen, 2024, pp. 113–114)... If these who are coming are defeated, Tiberias and the entire coast will be left undefended. No obstacle will remain for conquest."

One of the most prominent elements of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's tactical superiority is his ability to turn terrain and climatic conditions in his favor. His forcing the Crusaders to fight in waterless terrain in the scorching heat of July is a perfect example of a physical and psychological attrition strategy. According to Ibn Khaldūn's records, Şalāḥ al-Dīn took control of water sources and secured strategic superiority in the plain of Ḥiṭṭīn. While the Crusaders were advancing in heat and thirst, Şalāḥ al-Dīn's army ambushed them. The importance of water control is not limited to physical needs alone. In medieval warfare, thirst is a critical factor directly affecting combat capability, especially for Crusader knights wearing heavy armor. As narrated by Abū Shāma, throughout the night the Islamic army successfully prevented the enemy's access to water sources and conducted comprehensive preparations (Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 280). This situation broke the morale of Crusader soldiers and exhausted their physical strength. In the fighting that continued throughout Friday, the Crusader soldiers, who were partially surrounded, could not obtain water, and attempts to reach Lake Tiberias were also unsuccessful.

The continuous harassment attacks implemented by units under the command of Gökböri and Taqī al-Dīn 'Umar were an integral part of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's general strategy. This tactic functioned not only to physically exhaust the enemy army but also as an element of psychological pressure. Against the effective response of the Islamic forces, the Crusaders suffered serious casualties with each attempt. Particularly, the effective use of archer units significantly restricted the Crusader army's mobility. The distribution of four hundred sacks of arrows on Saturday morning and the placement of seventy camel loads of arrows at various points for use when needed demonstrates how meticulous the logistical preparation was (Bundārī, 2004, p. 374; Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 146). On the other hand, Şeşen who conducted detailed analyses of the Ayyubid army, points out that the 'archers' were the decisive factor in securing the victory at Ḥiṭṭīn. According to him, archers played the greatest role in this battle, and the Sultan placed his utmost trust in them. In particular, the Turkish light cavalry archers inflicted heavier casualties on the enemy than any other element (Şeşen, 1990, p. 432).

Şalāḥ al-Dīn's psychological warfare tactics played a decisive role in winning the victory at Ḥiṭṭīn. As narrated by Ibn Shaddād, throughout the night the Crusaders' morale was broken by the sounds of prayers and takbīr, and in the morning they were left under a smoke screen created by burning dry grass (Ibn Shaddād, 2021, p. 103). According to Ibn Khaldūn's narration, at the most critical moment of the battle, the wind blew from the opposite direction, the smoke from the grass that the Muslims had set on fire moved toward the Crusaders' faces, and the order of their armies was disrupted (Ibn Khaldūn, al-Ibar, vol. 5, p. 357). This situation not only reduced visibility but also made it difficult for Crusader soldiers to breathe and created panic. Gökböri's setting fire to the surrounding plants should be evaluated as a tactical maneuver beyond being a planned psychological pressure element. The smoke screen reduced the Crusader archers' ability to aim, prevented cavalry units from moving in a coordinated manner, and generally disrupted the army's order. This tactic can be accepted as an early example of the strategy known in modern war terminology as "smoke screen. This manipulation of environmental factors extends beyond mere tactical utility to a broader strategic dominance, a perspective strongly articulated in modern analyses. In his analysis of the battle from the Arab perspective, Maalouf (1983) asserts that the victory at Ḥiṭṭīn was achieved before the actual fighting began, primarily through Şalāḥ al-Dīn's mastery of psychological and environmental

warfare. While the Crusader leadership was paralyzed by internal discord—what Maalouf describes as their 'fatal lethargy'—Şalāḥ al-Dīn enlisted the scorching July heat and the 'wind of death' (carrying smoke and dust) as his allies. By forcing the thirst-stricken Franks to camp within sight of the Lake Tiberias but unable to reach it, he broke their spirit, transforming the battle into a slaughter of exhausted men rather than a contest of equals (Maalouf, 1983, pp. 173–174).

Şalāḥ al-Dīn's disciplined army order and the specific duties he gave to each unit ensured military discipline and enabled them to act in a coordinated manner. During the inspection conducted at Ashterā, the organization of the army into right wing, left wing, center, vanguard, and rearguard, and the determination of each emir's duty station demonstrates the effectiveness of the central command system. According to Ibn al-Athir narration, Şalāḥ al-Dīn personally moved among the lines at the most violent moment of the battle, encouraging his soldiers (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 146). This leadership style kept the soldiers' morale high and increased their fighting spirit.

Instant decisions such as Taqī al-Dīn's allowing Raymond's escape demonstrate the strategic flexibility of Şalāḥ al-Dīn's command echelon. Although this decision may appear to be a mistake at first glance, it actually led to the fragmentation and moral collapse of the Crusader army. Raymond, Reynald de Sidon, and Balian d'Ibelin's leaving the battlefield broke the resistance spirit of the remaining Crusader units and accelerated the army's disintegration. This situation can be evaluated as a successful application of the "divide and rule" strategy on the battlefield.

At the end of the battle, Şalāḥ al-Dīn captured the True Cross (Şalīb al-Şalībūt), and this situation became the final point of the Crusader army's moral collapse (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 147). The loss of the True Cross was not only the loss of a religious symbol for the Crusaders but also reinforced the belief that divine support had been withheld from them. This psychological blow transformed physical defeat into definitive rout.

In conclusion, Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's tactical superiority at Ḥiṭṭīn emerges as the successful application of a multilayered and integrated military strategy. The coming together of elements such as deception tactics, use of geographical advantages, water control, coordinated harassment attacks, psychological warfare methods, disciplined army order, and strategic flexibility made this victory inevitable. The Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn is one of the finest examples from military history that demonstrates that strategic planning and tactical genius, rather than numerical superiority or advanced weapons technology, can be decisive.

## **7. Reasons for the Crusader Army's Defeat**

The heavy defeat suffered by the Crusader army at the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn occurred through the convergence of reasons that are too complex and multilayered to be reduced to a single factor. To understand this defeat, it is necessary to systematically examine the military, political, and social dynamics of the period, the decision-making processes of the Crusader leadership, and the developments that occurred from before the war throughout the battle.

The most critical factor underlying the Crusader army's defeat is the decision to leave Şaffūriyya (Ernoul, 2019, pp. 133–134). According to the detailed narrative of the Ernoul Chronicle, this decision meant abandoning a position close to water sources and suitable for

defense, and is evaluated as the Crusaders' greatest strategic mistake. Şaffūriyya, by virtue of its geographical position, provided important advantages to the Crusader army: abundant water resources, the ability to camp on flat terrain, ease of defense against attacks that could come from surrounding hills, and most importantly, proximity to logistical support lines.

At the war council held on July 2, 1187, Count Raymond III of Tripoli insisted that the army should remain at Şaffūriyya. Raymond's argument was logical and based on experience: Şalāḥ al-Dīn's siege of Tiberias was a trap, and the Crusaders should not fall into this trap. Ironically, Raymond gave this advice despite the besieged city being under his own wife's administration. His this sacrificial attitude shows that strategic thinking should be held above personal interests. However, the Knights Templar led by Gerard de Ridefort and some other leaders accused Raymond of cowardice and even treason. According to Ibn al-Athīr's narration, the decision made by the Crusader leaders at this meeting was entirely based on emotional and prestige concerns (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 145). King Guy de Lusignan, due to his weak character and indecisive leadership, yielded to Gerard de Ridefort's pressure and gave the order for the army to move toward Tiberias. A comparative reading of the primary sources reveals a striking dichotomy regarding the motivations behind this fatal decision. While the Muslim chronicler Ibn al-Athīr interprets the move as a collective emotional reaction to maintain prestige driven by external pressure (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 145), the *Ernoul Chronicle* exposes a deeper internal conspiracy that contradicts this 'collective' view. According to Ernoul, the war council had initially accepted Count Raymond's sound advice to remain on the defensive, and the barons had retired for the night with this consensus. However, Gerard de Ridefort, the Grand Master of the Templars, privately entered the King's tent late at night and coerced him into reversing this decision, framing the defensive stance as a disgrace to the Crown and threatening to withdraw Templar support (Ernoul, 2019, pp. 136–138). This narrative highlights that the Crusader collapse was precipitated not merely by external strategic errors but by the subversion of the chain of command through personal vendettas.

The leadership crisis experienced by the Kingdom of Jerusalem is one of the preparatory factors for the Ḥiṭṭīn defeat. After King Baldwin IV died from leprosy in 1185, the kingdom entered a period of serious political instability. Guy de Lusignan's ascension to the throne caused deep divisions among the barons. The personal animosity between Raymond and Guy paralyzed the kingdom's defense strategy and destroyed the spirit of unity and solidarity.

The conflicts of interest among different groups in the Crusader army also played an important role in the defeat. The rivalry and distrust among the Knights Templar (Templiers), Hospitaller Knights (Hospitaliers), local barons, and newly arrived Crusaders from Europe made it impossible to develop a common strategy. Gerard de Ridefort's personal desire for revenge—due to his previous disagreement with Raymond—sabotaged the objective decision-making process. According to al-Maqrīzī's records, communication among the Crusader leaders before the battle had almost completely broken down (al-Maqrīzī, 3/407). This situation resulted in the emergence of an uncoordinated and ineffective command structure on the battlefield. The weakness of King Guy's authority led different units to act on their own, which reduced the army's overall effectiveness.

The physical collapse of the Crusader army, left without water in the July heat, is perhaps the most dramatic aspect of the defeat. According to Ibn Shaddād's vivid descriptions, the Crusader soldiers had already fallen into an exhausted state before fighting (Ibn Shaddād,

2021, p. 103). The army that departed from Şaffūriyya on the morning of July 3, 1187, tried to cover a distance of approximately 20 kilometers in the hottest hours of July, with heavy armor and equipment.

According to Ibn Khaldūn's narration, Şalāḥ al-Dīn took control of water sources and systematically prevented the Crusaders' access to these sources (Ibn Khaldūn, *al-ʿIbar*, vol. 5, p. 357). The Crusader army's water need was of vital importance, especially for heavily armored knights and their horses. A knight's horse's daily water requirement was approximately 30-40 liters, and the water consumption of an army with thousands of mounted soldiers was enormous. Thirst led not only to loss of physical strength but also to hallucinations, impairment of decision-making ability, and general loss of coordination.

The Crusader army's heavy equipment also played an important role in the defeat. The Crusader knights of the period were equipped with plate armor worn over chainmail, helmets, shields, and heavy weapons. The total weight of this equipment could reach 30-40 kilograms. Moving with this heavy equipment in the July heat caused soldiers to tire quickly and suffer heat stroke. In contrast, Şalāḥ al-Dīn's light cavalry units, with their clothing suitable for desert climate and light equipment, provided great advantage in terms of mobility.

The Crusaders' inability to take effective measures against Muslim harassment attacks is a clear indicator of their tactical inadequacies. According to ʿImād al-Dīn al-İşfahānī's detailed narrative, Muslim light cavalry and archers wore down the Crusader army by conducting continuous harassment attacks (al-İşfahānī, 2004, pp. 49–50). The Crusaders' heavy cavalry tactics remained ineffective against this type of guerrilla-like attacks.

The Crusader army's marching order can also be evaluated as a strategic mistake. The traditional order consisting of cavalry in the center and infantry around it, although it had been successful before, did not show the expected effect at Ḥiṭṭīn. The reason for this is that Şalāḥ al-Dīn had analyzed this tactic beforehand and developed countermeasures. Muslim archers managed to separate the Crusader infantry from the cavalry by targeting them, which disrupted the army's integrity.

The Crusaders' decision to camp at night is also controversial. On the evening of July 3, the army was forced to camp in a waterless area without reaching its destination. This situation led to the soldiers not being able to rest throughout the night, being exposed to Muslim forces' harassment attacks, and their morale deteriorating further. According to Abū Shāma's records, throughout the night the Muslims prevented the Crusaders from sleeping with the sounds of takbīr and prayers (Abū Shāma, 1997, vol. 3, p. 280).

The psychological warfare tactics applied by the Muslims were decisive in the Crusader army's moral collapse. According to Ibn Khaldūn's account, the smoke from the grass that the Muslims had set on fire, with the effect of the wind, moved toward the Crusaders and overwhelmed them. This situation not only created physical discomfort but was also perceived as divine punishment and deeply shook the morale of Crusader soldiers.

The capture of the True Cross represents the climax of psychological collapse. According to al-Maqrīzī's records, the loss of the True Cross (Şalīb al-Şalībūt) was seen by the Crusaders not only as the loss of a religious symbol but as definitive proof that divine support had been withheld from them (al-Maqrīzī, vol. 3 p. 407). This event also broke the last will to resist of Crusader soldiers who were already physically and mentally exhausted.

The death of the Bishop of Acre on the battlefield is also one of the important events that shook the army's morale. The presence of religious leaders was a critical element providing moral support in medieval armies. The bishop's death reinforced the belief that God had abandoned the Crusaders and contributed to the formation of a collective panic atmosphere.

The abandonment of the battlefield by important commanders such as Raymond, Balian d'Ibelin, and Reynald de Sidon during the battle led to the complete collapse of the Crusader army's organized structure. According to Ibn al-Athīr's detailed narrative, Raymond and a group of knights with him managed to charge from the wing where Taqī al-Dīn was positioned, break through the siege line, and escape (Ibn al-Athīr, 2003, vol. 10, p. 147; Bundārī, 2004, pp. 375–376). This flight created not only a military loss of strength but also a devastating effect on the morale of the remaining troops.

Raymond's escape is particularly symbolic because he was the commander who, before the battle, argued that they should remain at Şaffūriyya and was strategically proven right. His leaving the battlefield, while giving the message "I told you so," also created despair among the remaining soldiers. A commander's fleeing would be seen in medieval military tradition as the greatest example of treason and cowardice, but in Raymond's case, this can also be interpreted as a logical strategic withdrawal.

Although exaggerated figures of 50,000 to 60,000 are mentioned in sources (al-Işfahānī, 2004, p. 74; Ibn Kathīr, 2010; v. 12, p. 320), modern scholarship estimates the Crusader force to be approximately 22,000 men (Şeşen, 1990; p. 430; Runciman, 2008, v. 2, p. 412-413). However, the decisive factor in this battle was not numerical size, but rather the coordination problems experienced by this heterogeneous structure, composed of soldiers from different regions lacking shared combat experience.

Additionally, the presence of mercenaries in the Crusader army also constituted an element of weakness. These soldiers, when the course of the battle turned against them, showed disloyalty and tended to flee from the battlefield. In contrast, Şalāḥ al-Dīn's army consisted of soldiers who responded to the call for jihad and fought with religious motivation.

The Crusader defeat at Ḥiṭṭīn is a paradigmatic example from military history of how strategic mistakes, leadership crisis, logistical inadequacies, and psychological factors can come together to lead to disaster. This defeat was not merely a battle loss but also the beginning of the end of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. As recorded by al-Maqrīzī, after the battle, more than twenty thousand Muslim prisoners were freed, approximately one hundred thousand Crusaders were taken prisoner, and more than twenty cities including Jerusalem fell into Muslim hands (al-Maqrīzī, 3/407; Ibn Khaldūn, al-ʿIbar, vol. 5, p. 358).

The effects of this defeat were not limited to the military and political sphere but created a deep trauma in the Western Christian world. Pope Urban III's suffering a heart attack and dying, and the organization of the Third Crusade, demonstrate the dimensions of this trauma. Ḥiṭṭīn became a turning point showing that the Crusaders' presence in the East could not be permanent; after this, the Crusaders could only remain on the defensive and never regained their former strength.

## **8. Conclusion/Discussion/Suggestions**

The Battle of Hittin represents a watershed moment in medieval military history, demonstrating how strategic genius, tactical flexibility, and psychological warfare can decisively overcome numerical parity and established military traditions. This study has systematically analyzed the battle through three analytical frameworks: pre-war strategic preparations, tactical development during combat, and Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's multidimensional superiority. The victory was not merely fortuitous but resulted from comprehensive planning that integrated diplomatic maneuvering, logistical coordination, and exploitation of geographical-climatic advantages. Şalāḥ al-Dīn's deception tactic of besieging Tiberias successfully drew Crusader forces from their defensible position at Şaffūriyya, forcing them into waterless terrain during July's extreme heat. The systematic control of water sources, combined with continuous harassment attacks and psychological pressure through fire and smoke, physically and mentally devastated the Crusader army. The capture of the True Cross symbolized the complete moral collapse of Crusader resistance. The strategic implications extended beyond the battlefield: Jerusalem fell within three months, fundamentally altering the regional balance of power and demonstrating that medieval warfare success depended less on technological superiority than on integrated strategic vision, tactical adaptability, and understanding of terrain, climate, and human psychology.

The findings of this research illuminate several critical dimensions of medieval warfare that transcend the specific context of Hittin. First, the battle demonstrates the paramount importance of unified command structure versus fragmented leadership. While Şalāḥ al-Dīn maintained centralized authority and strategic coherence, the Crusader leadership suffered from internal divisions between Raymond III, Guy de Lusignan, and Gerard de Ridefort. These political fractures translated directly into tactical incoherence and catastrophic decision-making, particularly the choice to abandon Şaffūriyya despite Raymond's strategic counsel. Second, the research underscores how environmental factors, terrain, water, and climate—can be weaponized as force multipliers. Şalāḥ al-Dīn's control of water sources was not merely logistical but constituted a deliberate strategy of physical and psychological attrition. The July heat, combined with heavy Crusader armor and thirst, created conditions where combat effectiveness deteriorated before engagement commenced. Third, psychological warfare proved as decisive as kinetic combat. The burning of vegetation to create smoke screens, the continuous night-time harassment preventing rest, and ultimately the capture of the True Cross collectively shattered Crusader morale. Fourth, the battle illustrates the danger of emotional versus rational military decision-making. The Crusader choice to relieve Tiberias reflected political pressures and personal honor considerations rather than strategic calculation. Raymond's wife's appeals and Gerard de Ridefort's accusations of cowardice overrode military logic, demonstrating how non-military factors can fatally compromise command decisions. Finally, the research reveals the importance of pre-battle intelligence and preparation. Şalāḥ al-Dīn's mobilization of forces from Mosul, Egypt, Damascus, and al-Jazīra, his systematic reconnaissance, and his understanding of Crusader tactical preferences enabled comprehensive planning that the fragmented Crusader preparation could not match.

Based on the findings of this comprehensive analysis, several avenues for future research emerge. First, comparative studies examining other medieval battles where environmental factors proved decisive—such as Crécy (1346) or Agincourt (1415)—could illuminate whether

Şalāḥ al-Dīn's environmental warfare represents an isolated case or a broader medieval strategic paradigm. Second, deeper investigation into the psychological dimensions of medieval combat, particularly how religious symbols like the True Cross functioned as morale factors, would enhance understanding of medieval military psychology. Third, quantitative analysis of casualty rates, army compositions, and logistical capacities at Ḥiṭṭīn compared with other Crusader-Muslim engagements could provide statistical validation of qualitative assessments regarding Şalāḥ al-Dīn's tactical superiority. Fourth, comparative leadership studies analyzing Şalāḥ al-Dīn's command style against other medieval commanders—such as Richard I, Frederick Barbarossa, or Baybars—would contextualize his military genius within broader medieval leadership patterns. Sixth, research into the long-term strategic consequences of Ḥiṭṭīn on Crusader military doctrine and defensive strategies would illuminate how catastrophic defeats reshape institutional military thinking. Finally, interdisciplinary studies incorporating climate history, medical anthropology, and hydrology could provide more precise understanding of how July heat and water deprivation physiologically impacted heavily armored knights, thereby quantifying the environmental warfare dimension that proved so decisive at Ḥiṭṭīn.

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