

## MEDIEVAL SOURCEBOOK:

Ansbert:

Letter from the East to the Master of the Hospitallers, 1187

[TR] This letter gives the most reliable account of the events which decided the fate of the kingdom of Jerusalem. It is without pretence to literary style, and the spelling is very bad. In the text the proper names are spelled as in the original letter. The forms in brackets have been adopted from Rey's *Colonies franques de Syrie aux XII<sup>me</sup> et XIII<sup>me</sup> siècles* (Paris 1883), and Guy Le Strange's *Palestine under the Moslems*, (Boston and New York: 1890). The rapidity of Saladin's success and the hopelessness of the Christians are well brought out.

We make known to you, lord Archambault, master of the Hospitalers in Italy, and to the brethren, all the events which have happened in the countries beyond the seas.

Learn, therefore, that the king of Jerusalem was near Saphora [Sephoria] with a great army of at least thirty thousand men about the festival of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and was in perfect concord with the count of Tripoli, and the latter was with the army. And behold Saladin, the pagan king, approached Tabaria [Tiberias] with eighty thousand horsemen and took Tabaria. After this was done the king of Jerusalem left Saphora and went with his men drawn up against Saladin. And Saladin came against him near Marestutia [Marescallia] on the Friday after the festival of the Apostles Peter and Paul. Battle was engaged and during the whole day they fought fiercely, but night interrupted the strife. In the intervening night the king of Jerusalem fixed his tents near Salnubia, and on the next day, Saturday, moved with his army.

About the third hour the master of the Templars, with all his brethren, began the battle. They received no aid and, by God's permission, lost the greater portion of their men. After this happened, the king, by hard fighting and with great difficulty, went with his army to Naim, about a league distant, and then the count of Tripoli came to the king and made him pitch his tents near the mountain, which is a sort of fortress, and they were not able to pitch more than three tents. After this was done, the Turks seeing that they had pitched their tents, kindled fires around the army of the king, and, in truth, the heat was so great that the horsemen were baking and were not able to eat or drink. Next, Baldwin of Fatimor, Bacbaberbec of Tabaria and Leisius, with three other associates, separated themselves from the army, went over to Saladin and a thing which is grievous to relate - denied their faith, surrendered themselves to him, and betrayed to him the army of the king of Jerusalem, by revealing the difficult position in which it was.

Therefore Saladin sent against us Tecbedin [TakiEddin] with twenty thousand chosen soldiers who rushed upon our army, and the battle raged very fiercely from the ninth hour to vespers. And, because of our sins, very many of ours were killed, the Christian people were conquered, the king was captured' and the holy cross and count Gabula and Milo of Colaterido and Onfred

Botrono [Botron] and the lord of Marache and a thousand others of the best, captured and killed, so that not more than two hundred of the horsemen and soldiers escaped. The count

[Honfroy] the youth, and prince Reinald [Reginald] captured and killed. And Walter of Arsun and Hugo of Gibelen [Gibelin] and the lord of Tripoli, lord Basian and R. [Reginald], the lord of Sidon, escaped.

After this Saladin collected his army again and on Sunday came to Saphora and took Saphora and Nazareth, and Mount Tabor, and on Monday came to Acon [Acre], which is also called Acris; and those in Acon surrendered. Likewise those of Caifas and those of Cesarea [Caesarea] and of Jafa [Joppa], and of Naple [Neapolis], and of Ram [Ramlah], and of St. George, and of Ybelinon [Ibelin], and of Bellefort [Belfort], and of Mirabel, and of Tyron [Tyre], and of Gwaler, and of Gazer [Gaza], and of Andurum [Daruin], all surrendered. After this, when our galley moved from Sur [Tyre], they sent Sabani to Saladin that he should go to Jerusalem and they would surrender the city. And we fled with the galley to Lechia [Laodicea], and we heard that Tyre had surrendered. Moreover, the following cities are still safe and are awaiting aid from the western Church; namely, Jerusalem, Sur, Scalona [Ascalon], Marchat, Antyochia [Antioch], Lassar, Saona, Triplis [Tripoli]. Moreover, so great is the multitude of the Saracens and Turks that from Tyre, which they are besieging, they cover the face of the earth as far as Jerusalem, like an innumerable army of ants, and unless aid is quickly brought to the remaining above-mentioned cities and to the very few Christians remaining in the East, by a similar fortune they will be plundered by the raging infidels, thirsting for the blood of the Christians.

Source:

Ansbert in *Fontes Rerum Austriac.* 1 Abth., Vol V, p. 2. Latin. Reprinted in Beylagen to Wilken: *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* Vol. IV, pp 93-94, trans in Dana C. Munro, "Letters of the Crusaders", *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, Vol 1:4, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1896), 18-20

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