

THE HORNS OF HATTIN

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Saladin's Ḥaṭṭīn Letter

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The repetitive patterns of medieval Arabic diplomatic correspondence are colored by metaphor and rhetorical exaggeration. Here, facts are the one half-pennyworth of bread in an intolerable deal of sack, and to this general rule the Ḥaṭṭīn letter is no exception. Not surprisingly, it is a triumph song rather than a battlefield communiqué, but in spite of this it supplies a clue that is essential to an understanding of the battle. The letter tells us that the crusaders occupied "one of the waters" during their advance on Tiberias. If this is accepted as referring to the spring by the site of the village of Tur'ān, the detail transforms what is otherwise inexplicably foolish generalship into a militarily acceptable, if unfortunate, tactical plan.

What is given here is a transcription of MS. arabe 6024 in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. A full critical study has yet to be made of the manuscript tradition of Saladin's letters and, until this has been done, individual transcriptions must be treated with some reserve. The present state of research, however, suggests that, although individual words or phrases may be subject to alteration in a final edition, it is highly unlikely that the few facts presented here will be altered in any way.

(fol. 90^a) كتاب الى الديوان العزيز ايضاً يذكر فتح طبرية

أدام الله أيام الديوان العزيز النبوي ولا زال الاسلام يبقائه قاصي العزائم وجيوش اعدائه اذا عاينته
جيوش نصره تجرت ذبول الهزائم ولا برخت خياله في اجياد الحُصُون تمام ولا لبتت (fol. 90^a) اعداؤه
يتساقون كآس الخنوف حيث السيوف اذاهم والقُموذ كهم وجيشه المنصور يسر من اجنحة العقبان تحت
غمام متى اضطربت نار الهجير فغير المنية على جداول السيوف حوام ونصر الله تعالى مُحيطاً في موقف ثنُون
السيوف في القوام اصدر الخادم هذه الخدمة من ثمر عكنا حماها الله تعالى وقد تبسم لِقُدومنا فانتحنا ليل
الكفر عن جانبيه ووردناه فسقانا من رُصاب الرضا ما هزله الدين الحنيف عظيمه والاسلام قد اتسع
بجمله وتصرف انصاره ورجاله والكفر قد ثبتت اوجاله وذنت آجاله والفتح المبين قد خفت اعلامه
وسيف الله تعالى قد زاغ اهل الشرك ابتسامه والدولة الناصرية قد تولى الله رفع منارها وارتفاع نارها
والخفاص اعدائها بشنارها واللامها قد خطبت على منابر الانامل بشمارها وذلك أن الخادم برز على جسر
الحشب في يوم كذا وقد اجتمع (fol. 91^a) له من الصاكر ما ضاق به الفضاء الاكبر وحق لها يوم المسر أن

تُكَبِّرُ عَيْنَ الشَّمْسِ بِالْعِجَاجِ الْإِكْدَرِ وَتَوَجُّهُ إِلَى أَرْضِ الْعَدُوِّ بِجَيْشِ الْمُرْقَلِ وَعِزْمَةِ الْإِسْكَندَرِ عِنْدَمَا ظَهَرَ مِنْ
 خِذْلَانَ الْقَوْمِصَ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَنِفَاقِهِ وَنَقْضِهِ الْعُهُودَ عِنْدَ تَبَيُّهِ حَظَّهُ بَيْنَ مَلَاعِينَتِهِ وَنِفَاقِهِ فَصَبَّحَ الْخَادِمُ طَبْرِيَّةَ
 فَاقْتَضَى عُذْرَتَهَا بِالسَّيْفِ وَهَجَمَ عَلَيْهَا هَجُومَ الطَّيْفِ وَتَفَرَّقَ أَهْلُهَا بَيْنَ الْأَسْرِ وَالْقَتْلِ وَعَاجَلَهُمُ الْأَمْرُ فَلَمْ يَقْدِرُوا
 عَلَى الْخِدَاعِ وَالْحَتْلِ وَنَهَبَ مِنَ الذَّخَائِرِ وَالْأَمْوَالِ وَالْعَدَدِ وَالْإِنْفَالِ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمَقْنَطِرَةَ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالنِّفْضَةَ
 وَالخَيْلَ الْمُسَوِّمَةَ وَالْإِنْعَامَ مَا يَزِيدُ عَلَى التَّعْدَادِ وَيُنْهَضُ خَاطِرَ الشُّكْرِ وَالْإِعْتِدَادِ وَلَمَّا قَامَ قَائِمُ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَقَدْ
 اغْدَمَ اللَّهُ الْكُفْرَ نَاصِرَهُ وَظَهِيرَهُ جَاءَتْ جُمُوعُ الْفَرَنْجِ حَاشِدَةً وَأَتَتْ لِضَالَّةٍ ضَالَهَا نَاشِدَةً رَجَاءَ الْمَلِكِ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ
 مِنْ كُفَّارِهِ وَلَمْ يَشْعُرْ أَنَّ لَيْلَ الْكُفْرِ قَدْ آتَتْ وَقَدْ اسْفَارَهُ فَلَمَّا نَظَرَ (fol. 91^b) إِلَيْهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا سَافِلَهَا
 وَأَيَقَطْنَا بِقَائِمِ السَّيْفِ نَائِمَهَا وَنَبَّهْنَا غَافِلَهَا نَصَبَ صَلِيبِ الصَّلْبُوتِ وَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ أَنَّ نَاصِرَ الظُّلْمِ مَكْبُوتٌ وَأَنَّ مَا
 شَادَهُ مِنْ ضَلَالِهِ أَوْهَى مِنْ بَيْتِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ فَحَامَتِ حَوْلَ الْمَاءِ صَقُورُ رِجَالِهِ وَعَقِبَانُ خَيْلِهِ وَمَلِكٌ أَحَدُ
 الْمِيَاهِ بِقَصْدِهِ لَهُ وَمِيلُهُ إِلَّا أَنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ سَوَّلَ لَهُ خِلَافَ مَا قَصَدَ وَحَسَّنَ لَهُ غَيْرَ مَا أَرَادَ وَعَاعْتَمَدَ فَهَضَبَ عَنِ الْمَاءِ
 وَتَوَجَّهَ تَلْقَاءَ طَبْرِيَّةَ وَحَكَمَ بِأَدْرَاكِ ثَارِهِ لِمَا فِيهِ مِنْ كِبَرٍ وَجَبْرِيَّةَ فَانْهَضَ الْخَادِمُ ابْنَ أَخِيهِ تَقِيَّ الدِّينِ
 وَمُظَفَّرَ الدِّينِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ فَلَمَّا كَانُوا نَازِلًا عَلَيْهِ لَوْرَدَاهُ مِنْ دِمَاءِ الْمَلَاعِينِ وَوَرْدَاهُ وَبَقِيَّ مَعْصُورًا لَا يُمْكِنُ
 الْفِرَارُ وَلَا يُسَوِّغُ لَهُ الْقِرَادُ وَأَضْرَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ نَارًا ذَاتَ شَرَارٍ إِذْ كَرَّتْ بِهَا أَعْدَاءُ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ فِي دَارِ الْقِرَادِ فَلَقِيَهُمُ الْخَادِمُ وَقَدْ
 اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِمْ نِيرَانُ الْعَطَشِ وَجَازَاهُمْ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ سِيَّاتِهِمْ فَاشْتَدَّ بَطْشُهُ عَلَيْهِمْ إِذْ بَطَشَ فَثَبَّتْ سَنَابِلُ الْخَيْلِ
 (fol. 92^a) سَمَاءً مِنَ الْعِجَاجِ نُجُومُهَا الْأَيْسَّةُ وَطَارَتِ إِلَيْهِمْ عَقِبَانُ مِنَ الْخَيْوَلِ قَوَادِمُهَا الْقَوَائِمُ وَمَخَالِبُهَا
 الْأَعْيَّةُ وَتَصَوَّبَتْ عُيُونُ السُّمْرِ إِلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ كَأَنَّهَا تَطْلُبُ سَوَادَهَا وَقَصَدَتْ أَهَارَ السُّيُوفِ أَكْبَادَهَا فَكَأَنَّهَا
 أَرَادَتْ أَنْ تُرَوِي كُبَادَهَا فَشَرِبُوا كَأْسَ الْمَنُونِ لَمَّا تَوَرَّدَتْ صَفْحَاتُ الصِّفَاحِ وَغَازَلَهُمُ الرِّيحُ وَعَقَدَتْ لَهُمْ
 الْحَوَافِرُ غَمَامًا مِنَ الْعُبَارِ وَأَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَطْرًا مِنَ السِّهَامِ مَتَطَاثِرَةَ الشَّرَارِ وَحَدَّثَتْهَا رُغُودٌ مِنَ الصَّهِيلِ وَأَبْرَقَتْ فِي
 جَوَانِبِهَا بَرُوقًا مِنْ كُلِّ سَيْفٍ صَقِيلٍ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَوْمِصَ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ أَنَّ الدَّائِرَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَرِيعَةً الْكُونَ نَكَصَ عَلَى
 عَقْبِيَّتِهِ وَقَالَ أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِنْكُمْ أَنِّي أَرَى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ فَطَحَّخْتَهُمُ الْخَيْوَلُ بِمَنَاقِبِهَا وَرَمَتْهُمُ سَمَاءُ الْعِجَاجِ بِكُوَاكِبِهَا وَفَضَى
 اللَّهُ نَصْرَ الْمَلَّةِ الْحَنِيفِيَّةِ وَاسْتَظْهَرَهَا رِوَاكِبُهَا فَوَضَحَ لِلْمَلِكِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ مَا أَخْفَاهُ عَنْهُ الْبَاطِلُ وَأَرْتَهُ الْمَعْرَكَةَ مَا كَانَ
 يَسْتُرُهُ عَنْهُ زَايَةُ الْخَاطِلِ فَتَرَجَّلَ هُوَ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ عَنِ صَهَوَاتِ الْجِيَادِ وَتَسَنَّمُوا هَضْبَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ رَجَاءً أَنَّ
 (fol. 92^b) يَنْجِيهِمْ مِنْ خَيْرِ السُّيُوفِ الْحَدَادِ وَنَصَبُوا لِلْمَلِكِ خَيْمَةً حَمْرَاءَ وَضَعُوا عَلَى الشَّرِكِ عِمَادَهَا وَتَوَلَّتْ
 الرِّجَالُ يَحْفَظُ أَطْنَابَهَا فَكَانُوا أَوْتَادَهَا فَنَزَلَ أَصْحَابُنَا عَنْ ظُهُورِ الْخَيْوَلِ وَضَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ وَاتَّقَيْنَ بِأَدْرَاكِ الْمَأْمُولِ
 وَوَدَّتْ طُيُورُ التَّبَالِ أَوْكَارَهَا مِنَ الْجَعَابِ وَتَصَوَّبَتْ عُيُونُ السُّمْرِ إِلَى أَمْثَالِهَا مِنَ النُّجُومِ تَشَكُّوْا ظَمًا الْكِعَابِ
 وَصَهَلَتْ الْخَيْوَلُ غَيْظًا حَيْثُ لَمْ تَخْتَضِبْ بِدِمَائِهِمْ حُجُوبُهَا وَاشْتَاقَتْ الْأَرْضُ إِلَى وَقَعِ حَوَافِرِهَا الَّتِي تَكْسُوفُهَا
 حَلِيَّةُ السَّمَاءِ مِنَ الْإِهْلَةِ عِنْدَمَا تَجُولُهَا فَكَانَتْ الدَّوْلَةُ لِلْقَائِمِ وَلَمْ يَتَجَاوَزْ حَدَّهُ فِي الْعَدْلِ الَّذِي هُوَ لَازِمٌ فَأَخَذَ الْمَلِكُ
 أَسِيرًا وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا وَأَسِيرَ الْإِبْرَنْسِ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ فَحَصَدَ بَذْرَهُ وَقَتَلَهُ الْخَادِمُ بِيَدِهِ وَوَفَّى بِذَلِكَ
 نَذْرَهُ وَأَسْرَ جَمَاعَةً مِنْ مُقَدِّمِي دَوْلَتِهِ وَكِبْرَاءِ ضَلَاتِيَّتِهِ وَكَانَتْ الْقَتْلَى يَزِيدُ عَلَى أَرْبَعِينَ أَلْفًا وَلَمْ يَبْقَ أَحَدٌ مِنْ
 الدِّيُوِيَّةِ قَلِيلُهُ هُوَ مِنْ يَوْمِ تَصَاخَبَ فِيهِ الدُّنْبُ وَالنَّسْرُ وَتَدَاوَلَ فِيهِ الْقَتْلُ وَالْأَسْرُ وَبَاتَ (fol. 93^a) الْكُفَّادُ
 فِيهِ مُقْرَبِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ مُمْتَعِينَ الْإِدَاهِمِ إِلَّا أَنَّهَا غَيْرُ الْمُطَهَّمَةِ الْجِيَادِ وَلَمَّا كَانَ يَوْمَ كَذَى نَزَلْنَا عَلَى ثَعْرٍ
 عَنَّا مُقَابِلِينَ وَنَهَضْنَا إِلَى أَهْلِهَا مُقَاتِلِينَ وَلَاذُوا بِالْأَمَانِ فَأَمْتَاهُمْ عَامِلِينَ بِسَنَةِ الْإِيمَانِ وَدَخَلْنَا فِي يَوْمِ كَذَا
 شَاكِرِينَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى هَذِهِ الْمَوْهَبَةِ الْجَسِيمَةِ عَارِفِينَ لِلَّهِ جَلَّ وَعَلِيَّ عَلَى قَدْرِ هَذِهِ النِّعْمَةِ الْعَظِيمَةِ الْعَمِيمَةِ فَالْحَمْدُ

لِلّٰهِ الَّذِي رَفَعَ كَلِمَةَ الْاِيْمَانِ وَاَعْلَاهَا وَحَفِظَ الْكَلِمَةَ الْعَبَّاسِيَّةَ وَتَوَلَّاهَا وَزَيَّنَ السِّيْرَةَ النَّاصِرِيَّةَ بِهَذِهِ الْمَفَاخِرِ
وَحَلَّاهَا وَمَتَّحَا آيَةَ الْكُفْرِ بِآيَةِ الْاِسْلَامِ وَحَلَّاهَا وَالسَّلَامِ.

Another letter to the glorious *Dīwān*, giving an account of the capture of Tiberias.

May God perpetuate the days of the glorious Prophetic *Dīwān*; may its continuation ensure that Islamic precepts are fulfilled, while the armies of its enemies, seeing its victorious hosts, trail the skirts of defeat; may its horsemen continue to be amulets hung round the necks of fortresses; may its enemies not cease [90b] from finding the cup of death poured out where swords are flowers, whose calix is the scabbard, while its victorious army travels on eagles' wings under the clouds, with the birds of fate hovering around the streaming swords in the blazing fire of noon, while God's encompassing mercy is found where the sword hilts betray the swords.

The servant has sent this message of service from the outpost of Acre, may Almighty God preserve it, which has smiled at our arrival, as the night of unbelief cleared from around it. We came to it and it gave us to drink from what the Ḥanefite religion had shaken down for it of the saliva of satisfaction. The domain of Islam has expanded; its helpers and its warriors move freely, while the fears of the unbelievers are confirmed and their fate is near. The standards of clear victory are fluttering and the gleam of God's sword has terrified the polytheists. God has seen to the lifting up of the minaret of the *Nāṣirid dawla*, the raising of its fire, and the bringing down of its enemies in disgrace, while its pens have recited its insignia on the pulpits of its fingers.

The servant advanced to the Wooden Bridge on such-and-such a day, having collected armies [91a] for which the vast plain was too narrow, darkening the eye of the sun with their dust cloud when they marched. He set off for the land of the foe with the army of Heraclius and the resolution of Alexander when the desertion of the Count, may God curse him, his hypocrisy and his breaking of covenants became clear, this being when his position became re-established and flourishing amongst his own damned people.

The servant attacked Tiberias in the morning, deflowering it with the sword and assaulting it in a rage. Its people were scattered, being either captured or killed, and they had no time to allow them to use deception and deceit. Stores, wealth, equipment and booty were seized, together with heaped piles of gold and silver,¹ fine horses and luxuries, in quantities past all counting, stirring up thoughts of gratitude and reliance (on God).

At noon, when God had deprived the unbelievers of help and assistance, the massed hosts of the Franks came in search of what had been lost by their misguidedness. The King came with his infidel companions, not knowing that

1 Cf. Qur'ān 3.12.

dawn was about to break on the night of unbelief. When he saw [91b] that we had turned the town upside down,² rousing its sleepers by the sword and alerting the heedless, he set up the Cross, not realizing that whoever supports injustice will be cast down and that what he constructs in his error is more fragile than a spider's web.

The hawks of his infantry and the eagles of his cavalry hovered around the water and he took one of the waters by marching to it and turning aside. But the devil seduced him³ into doing the opposite of what he had in mind and made to seem good to him what was not his (real) wish and intention. So he left the water and set out towards Tiberias, deciding, through pride and arrogance, to take his revenge.

The servant then sent his nephew, Taqī al-Dīn, and Muẓaffar al-Dīn to the water, which they seized, and had they found him camped there, they would have dyed the water red with the blood of the damned infidels and seized him. He remained beleaguered, unable to flee and not allowed to stay. The servant kindled against him fire, giving off sparks, a reminder of what God has prepared for them in the next world. He then met them in battle, when the fires of thirst had tormented them and God had requited them for their past evils, assaulting them with His violence. The hooves of the horses [92a] produced a sky of dust, whose stars were lance points. The eagles of the (Muslim) horse flew at them, their fore-feathers being their legs, and the talons their bridles. The eyes of the spears were directed at their hearts, as though they were looking for their inmost parts. Rivers of swords sought out their livers, as though wanting to water what was diseased there. They drank the cup of fate when the sides of the sword blades came to water and the spears courted them. The horses' hooves massed dust clouds for them; showers of arrows, shooting out sparks, were sent down on them, merged together by the thunder of neighing horses, with the lightning of polished swords flashing alongside them.

When the Count, may God curse him, saw that fortune was revolving swiftly against them, he turned back, saying: "I have nothing to do with you. I see what you do not see."⁴ Then the horses pounded them with their shoulders and the dusty sky hurled stars against them. God decreed the victory of the Ḥanefite faith and the triumph of its squadrons.

There now became clear to the King, may God curse him, what falsehood had concealed from him and the battle showed him what his foolish judgement had concealed from him. He and his companions dismounted from horseback and mounted a hill, hoping that [92b] it would save them from the heat of the sharp swords. They set up a red tent for the King, its pole resting on polytheism. Their men undertook to guard its ropes, but became its pegs. Our companions dismounted and climbed up to them, confident of obtaining the goal for which

2 Cf. Qur'ān 15.74.

3 Cf. Qur'ān 47.27.

4 Cf. Qur'ān 8.50.

they hoped. The arrow birds were restored to the quiver nests; the eyes of the spears were directed to the stars (which gleamed) like them, complaining of the drought of their joints. The horses neighed in anger where their legs were not stained with Frankish blood and the earth longed for their hoof prints to ornament it, as crescent moons ornament the sky, by circling over it. Sovereignty belonged to the sword-hilt and its blade did not pass beyond necessary justice.

The King was captured, and this was a hard day for the unbelievers.⁵ The Prince, may God curse him, was taken and the servant harvested his seed, killing him with his own hand and so fulfilling his vow. A number of the leaders of his state and the great men of his false religion were taken prisoner, while the dead numbered more than forty thousand. Not one of the Templars survived. It was a day of grace, on which the wolf and the vulture kept company, while death and captivity followed in turns. The unbelievers [93a] were tied together in fetters, astride chains rather than stout horses.

On such-and-such a day we advanced against the outpost of Acre, coming up to fight its garrison. They sought refuge in a (request for) quarter, which we granted them, in accordance with Muslim custom. We entered the town on such-and-such a day, thanking God for this great gift and acknowledging to Him, the Great and Glorious, the extent of this vast and universal benefit.

Glory to God, who has raised up and exalted the word of faith and has preserved 'Abbāsid authority, taking it into His charge, adorning and gilding the career of al-Nāṣir with these triumphs and blotting out the sign of the unbelief with that of Islam,⁶ to which He has added sweetness.

5 Cf. Qur'ān 25.28.

6 Cf. Qur'ān 17.13.