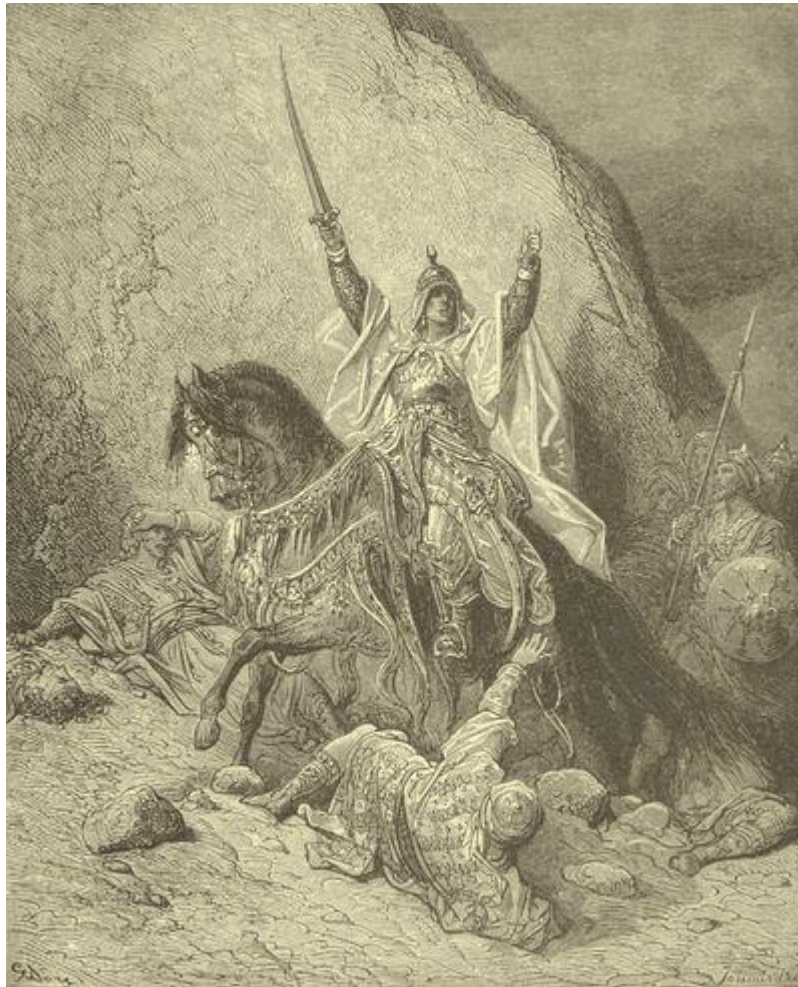


# Saladin



**Biography Workbook Series**

**SALADIN**  
(1137-1192)

There are two great names in the tangled and somewhat tedious story of Islam which stand out, deathless, from the crowd of sultans, viziers, and Muslim conquerors—the names of Haroun al Raschid and Saladin. The former has become the accepted type of a good and just despot. The latter is the Bayard<sup>1</sup> of his religion, the knight and captain, king and magistrate, *sans peur et sans reproche*<sup>2</sup>, whose enemies respected and trusted him as much as his own people loved him.

Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem and overthrow of the Christian kingdom were but episodes, and from his point of view, not the most important episodes in his thirty years of war and victory. The History of Egypt, the History of Syria, the History of the Islamic faith, contain more pages filled with the achievements of Saladin than even the History of the Crusades. Everyone has read of the Battle of Hattin<sup>3</sup>. But of the healing of the great schism and

the restoration of Egypt to orthodoxy—a step thought to be impossible and of the highest importance to Islam—very few know anything. Let us endeavor to present the history of this great man with some attempt to show the true proportions of his achievements in the eyes of the East, if not the West.

Yûssuf ibn Ayûb—Joseph the son of Job—was by descent a Kurd. His father was a retainer or follower of the celebrated Nûr-ed-Din (Light of Religion), Sultan of Syria. Nûr-ed-Din was the prince who, after many years of humiliation, recovered some of the lost prestige of the Islamic name, wrested many of their outlying strongholds from the Christians, and prepared the way for his more illustrious successor.

1. Saladin was born with what name?

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2. Saladin was born a \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. Babylonian
- b. Kurd
- c. Palestinian
- d. Syrian

<sup>1</sup> Bayard is a mythical horse known for his spirit.

<sup>2</sup> The French phrase *sans peur et sans reproche* translates into English as "without fear and without reproach."

<sup>3</sup> The Battle of Hattin took place on July 4, 1187. It pitted the Ayyubids, under Saladin, against the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller, Knights Templar, Order of Saint Lazarus, and Principality of Antioch.

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The caliphate was then divided into the Fatimid line, which reigned at Cairo, and the Abbasid, which reigned at Baghdad. Both branches had by this time fallen into a mere semblance of authority. The bitterness of theological differences survived. For the reestablishment of Islamic power, though, it was absolutely necessary that the schism should cease. Yet there seemed no likelihood whatever of any change.

### 3. What caliphate reigned at Cairo (in modern Egypt)?

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### 4. What caliphate ruled at Baghdad (in modern Iraq)?

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The weaker of the two, since the rise of Nûr-ed-Din, was undoubtedly the Egyptian house. The last of the Fatimid caliphs were mere tools in the hands of rival ministers, and passed their ignoble lives—*Rois Fainéants*<sup>4</sup>—in their luxurious palaces. Syria, which had been theirs, was lost to them, and occupied partly by Muslims of the rival sect, and partly by the

Christians. Their final fall, however, was caused by internal dissensions and the quarrels of two candidates for the post of Grand Vizier. Their names were Shower and Dargham. The former, unable to contend against his rival, applied for assistance to Nûr-ed-Din, offering for reward a third of the Egyptian revenues.

### 5. Who appealed to Nûr-ed-Din, the Sultan of Syria, for assistance?

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The expedition which was sent in reply was the first chance of distinction which young Yûssuf (Saladin) had obtained. The army, commanded by his uncle Shirkoh, easily defeated Dargham and reinstated Shower. Then followed the reluctance to keep the terms of the agreement which is so common in history. And when Shirkoh in return seized the city of Balbek and held it as security, Shower sent to Amaury, King of Jerusalem, for succor.

### 6. Who was the uncle of Saladin?

- a. Amaury
- b. Dargham
- c. Shower
- d. Shirkoh

Amaury, the bravest if not the wisest of the Crusader kings, thinking

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<sup>4</sup> *Rois Fainéants* is a French term meaning "lazy kings."



The point which Amaury failed to understand was this. He who moved first was bound to lose, for he would draw upon himself the other two. Amaury moved first. We cannot follow the Christian king on his disastrous attempt. It is sufficient to say that Shirkoh, after a brief struggle, remained master of the field and of Egypt. The fall of the Christian kingdom, thus rendered possible, was only delayed until the consolidation of the new power was complete.

**9. Amaury was victorious in his conquest of Egypt.**

- a. True
- b. False

Immediately after his final victory Shirkoh died, and was succeeded by his nephew Yûssuf ibn Ayûb, now called Salah-ed-Din (Shield of Religion, or Saladin to Westerners), el Melek el Mansûr (the Victorious King), and Emir el Jayûsh (Commander-in-chief of the Forces). The Fatimid caliph, not yet deposed, made him Grand Vizier. In other words, this soldier of fortune was master of Egypt and of the Fatimid caliphate. More important still, if the King of Jerusalem understood the importance of the fact, he acknowledged himself to be the vassal of Nûr-ed-Din, Sultan of Syria.

The first step taken by Saladin, a coup d'état which restored Egypt to the orthodox sect, was the substitution of the Abbasid caliph's name for that of their own prince in the Friday prayers. This was done without the slightest opposition. Contempt for the head of their religion could not be more effectually shown. Saladin therefore boldly proclaimed the name of the Baghdad caliph. It was received so quietly, as the Arab historian says, "that not a brace of goats butted over it."

**10. A caliph, the ruler of a caliphate, claimed hereditary succession. In the medieval Islamic world, the title had both political and religious meaning. How might something seemingly so simple as the substitution of one caliph's name for another during Friday prayers signify a change in leadership?**

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The last of the Fatimid caliphs died a few days after. It was one of those deaths, so frequent in history, which occur so exactly at the moment most convenient. Did Saladin order him to be bowstrung? Probably. Such an act would be regarded as perfectly legitimate and in accordance with the rules of the game.



*Saladin.*

How the victorious emir, on the death of Nûr-ed-Din, succeeded in making himself master of Syria and succeeding his lord, and how he carried on the war with the Christians unceasingly, would require volumes to tell. Many volumes indeed have been devoted to this history. His two great

achievements were the reunion of Islam and the destruction of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem. The latter at least, he effectually accomplished. Western Europe was incapable of a second effort so great as that mighty wave of enthusiasm which won back the Holy Land and covered the plains of Asia Minor with the bones of Crusaders. Richard Cœur de Lion and Philip Augustus, Frederick II, the kings of Cyprus, the Knights of St. John, carried on the long, interminable struggle, but Jerusalem was lost.

11. What were Saladin's two greatest achievements?

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Of the chivalry and honor of Saladin his biographers are never weary. When, for instance, the Christians took Jerusalem they slaughtered every soul in the place; their horses were knee-deep in blood. When Saladin took the city he suffered none to be slain. When there was no more money for ransom, Saladin allowed thousands to go free. To the weeping widows and fatherless girls, he gave purses of money and suffered

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no outrage to be done to them. Saladin divided them into three bands and assigned an escort to each company. And then was seen the strange spectacle, when the women and children grew fatigued, of the victors placing them on their horses and walking afoot, or even carrying the children in their arms. Again, why has no one painted that famous scene when Richard Cœur de Lion wanted no oaths, but instead gave his hand to Saladin in token of respect for his enemy and his own loyalty?

**12. Explain why Saladin's mercy earned him the respect of all, including his enemies. Can you imagine a military leader behaving similarly today?**

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Such is the brief history of Saladin, a soldier first, always a soldier, spending his whole life on the battle-field; the perfect knight of the Muslims, fierce in fight, generous in victory, faithful to his word, true to his religion, of a larger heart and nobler soul than Cœur de Lion, the only antagonist who can be named with him. Saladin was one of the few out of the countless millions of humanity, whose name lives and whose memory will never die. His life is an example, his history a monument.

Vocabulary Terms: Match each term (used in the text above) to its meaning.

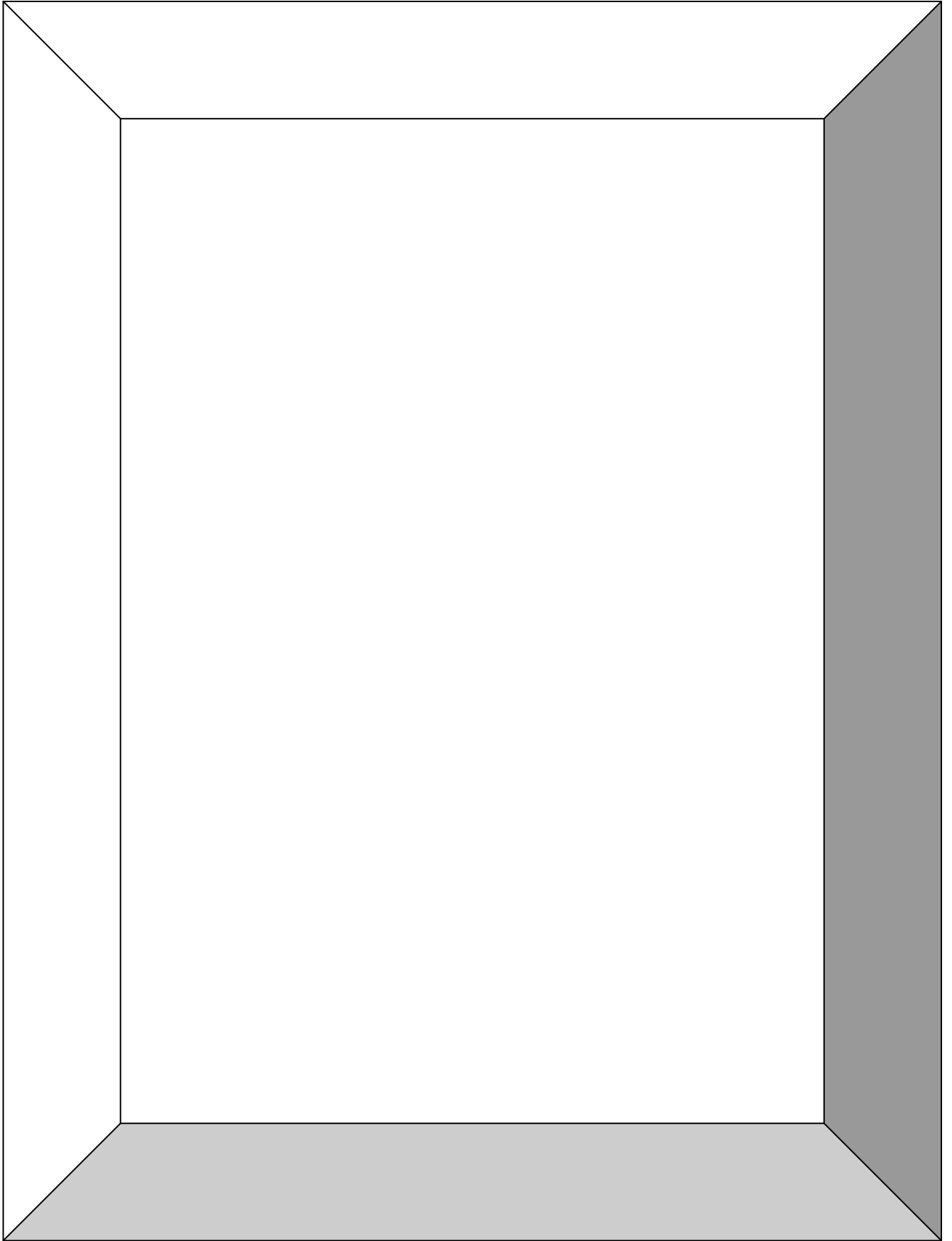
13. \_\_\_\_ a person or thing that follows
14. \_\_\_\_ act of serving in place of someone or something else
15. \_\_\_\_ action of combating or resisting
16. \_\_\_\_ adversary or opponent
17. \_\_\_\_ anything of a striking nature presented to view
18. \_\_\_\_ approved belief or practice
19. \_\_\_\_ autocrat
20. \_\_\_\_ base or mean
21. \_\_\_\_ calamitous
22. \_\_\_\_ long and tiresome
23. \_\_\_\_ the ideal qualifications of a knight
24. \_\_\_\_ unending
25. \_\_\_\_ unification

- (a) antagonist
- (b) chivalry
- (c) consolidation
- (d) despot
- (e) disastrous
- (f) ignoble
- (g) interminable
- (h) opposition
- (i) orthodoxy
- (j) spectacle
- (k) substitution
- (l) successor
- (m) tedious



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Artistic Expression: Illustrate a scene from the life of Saladin.



Word Search Puzzle



Abbasid

Amaury

Baghdad

Cairo

caliphate

Egypt

Fatimid

Islam

Jerusalem

mercy

Kurd

Richard

Saladin

sultan

Syria

vizier