

July 2013

RENAISSANCE MONTHLY

Your monthly update on The Renaissance Project



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Mohamed Al Qadi



Friends,

Ramadan Kareem and welcome to this special Ramadan monthly newsletter that is themed around **determination**.

Big news on the campaign so far; we have **collected over 1350 gifts as of today** of which about half are new!

Our target is to collect **3000 more** items so all the kids at the camp have a gift for Eid.

Please, if you haven't done so already, donate your used toys, buy new ones, and help spread the word!



For more information on how to contribute to the campaign, visit: <http://www.the-renaissance-project.com/#!gifts4good/c1f1x>

The Blue Mosque – Istanbul, Turkey Mosques Around the World

By Yasmine Saqer



The Hagia Sophia was the most magnificent temple in Istanbul and of its time. Yet as Sultan Ahmed observed its awe inspiring structure, he could not help but feel disappointed; Istanbul's most defining landmark was not built by the Othmans, but by the Byzantines.

Its presence was a constant reminder that the Othman empire, with all its greatness, could not rival the brilliance of ancient Constantinople. In 1609, Ahmed would change all that. Built opposite from the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque was designed by Sedefhar, its architect, to rival its counterpart as one of the greatest structures in history.

Unique to other mosques, the Blue Mosque was designed with six minarets—most mosques have one, two, or four. In addition to the minarets, the exterior of the mosque is made up of a beautiful arrangement of cascading domes. However, what the name “Blue Mosque” refers to are the blue tiles inside. Inside the high ceiling is lined with 20,000 blue tiles, each designed with flowers, trees, and abstract patterns.



Reflecting the 16th century Iznik styling, the interior is an overwhelming sight. The 260 windows inside were originally filled with 17th century stained glass, gifts from the Signoria of Venice. The decorations and tablets on the walls are inscribed with the names and verses from the Quran, which have been frequently restored. And to innovatively prevent cobwebs, ostrich eggs can be found on the chandeliers to ward off spiders. But the most important element of this spectacular mosque is the Mihrab. The mosque was designed so that everyone inside can hear and see the Imam, even when its crowded.

The mosque was completed in 1617, just in time for Sultan Ahmed to see his dream come to life before his death. An ambitious project in its time, it stands today as a visionary piece of architecture and one of Istanbul's greatest landmarks. It is a triumphant example of determination, and one of history's most extraordinary achievements.

Article: Why Islam Is Not The Answer

<http://www.the-renaissance-project.com/#!other-articles/c15n8>

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Jafar Ibn Abi Talib – “Al Tayar”

Muslim of the Month



He is without a doubt one of the strongest, most celebrated and most determined figures in Islamic history; Jafar Ibn Abi Talib is simply a legend. His story and death still inspires people to this very day and the impact of his actions still reverberates across the Islamic world.

Jafar is the prophet's direct cousin and Ali Bin Abi Talib's elder brother. He was one of the first people to accept Islam and became one of the Prophet's closest companions. Despite his poverty, Jafar would still manage to earn himself a reputation for being a champion of the poor. This was especially true during the times of prosecution:

When the pagans of Quraish started prosecuting the poorer Muslims in Mecca, Jafar was one of the first people to lead them to the Christian kingdom of Habasha (Ethiopia) in Islam's very first "Hijra". More importantly, when Quraish attempted to convince Habasha's King to expel Muslims from his Kingdom, Jafar proved instrumental in protecting the refugees through his conversations with the King.

Jafar would then conduct his second Hijra, this time to Medina to be reunited with the prophet. And though Jafar was lauded for his efforts in protecting the poor, he would ultimately be remembered for his inhuman act of courage during the battle of Mu'tah. Heracles, Emperor of Byzantium had assembled a massive army of over 100,000 men. Only 3,000 Muslim men went out to fight them under the leadership of Zaid Ibn Haritha with Jafar appointed as the second man in command.

As the battle progressed, Zaid Ibn Haritha was killed and the Muslims were thrown into confusion. Jafar quickly sensed the danger of this, picked up the Muslim Banner with his right hand and threw himself against the enemy, fighting like a lion, and in the process, encouraging his troops. The Byzantines knew they had to kill Jafar and so targeted him, cutting off his right arm. But instead of falling to his death, Jafar did the impossible; he would pick himself back up and hold the banner in his left hand and continue fighting. Soon, his left hand would be cut off too. With no arms left to carry his banner, Jafar would raise it using his shoulders until he was finally killed. Jafar was stabbed over 80 times during the battle, and with his death, this inhuman feat of determination is celebrated and admired to this very day as proof of what men are truly capable of.

Jafar Ibn Abi Talib would be dubbed as Jafar al Tayar after his death, for it is said that he would be rewarded with wings for this lost arms, able to fly over heaven.

AYAH OF THE MONTH

EPISODE 6- “Discipline & Will” – Ramadan Special

This Ramadan, we have a special 4 part Ayah of the Month Series that talks about the main principles of this month, inspired by fasting. In this newsletter you will find Part 3 (see below) which talks about discipline and determination.



For Parts 1 & 2, see below:

Part 1: “A Brand New Start”:
<http://youtu.be/-4pYGYA9IVo>

Part 2: “Gratitude”:
<http://youtu.be/cxohCkxJB4>

WHO WE ARE GRATEFUL TO

Yasmine Saqer – Writer & Newsletter Editor



In this special edition of our monthly newsletter, I would like to take the opportunity to thank a very special contributor; our very own **Yasmine Saqer!** Yasmine has done an excellent job in writing “Muslim of the Month” and in recognition of her work, she has been offered the position of newsletter editor. Join me

in thanking Yasmine for all her current and future contributions and congratulating her on her new job; I am glad to have you onboard - the newsletter looks so much better already.

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