

# Islamic Mausoleums in Southern Jordan

## Martyrs of the Battle of Mou'ta

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A View of «Mou'ta Mausoleums» from outside

“The three mou'ta martyrs, whose graves in Jordan were recently changed to mausoleums, were renowned companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, they were in the vanguard of defending the principle of monotheism as against polytheism (*shirk*) and paganism (*jahiliyya*), thus helping to reshape the Islamic community and its laws in accordance with the new divine revelations to humanity through the Prophet Muhammad.

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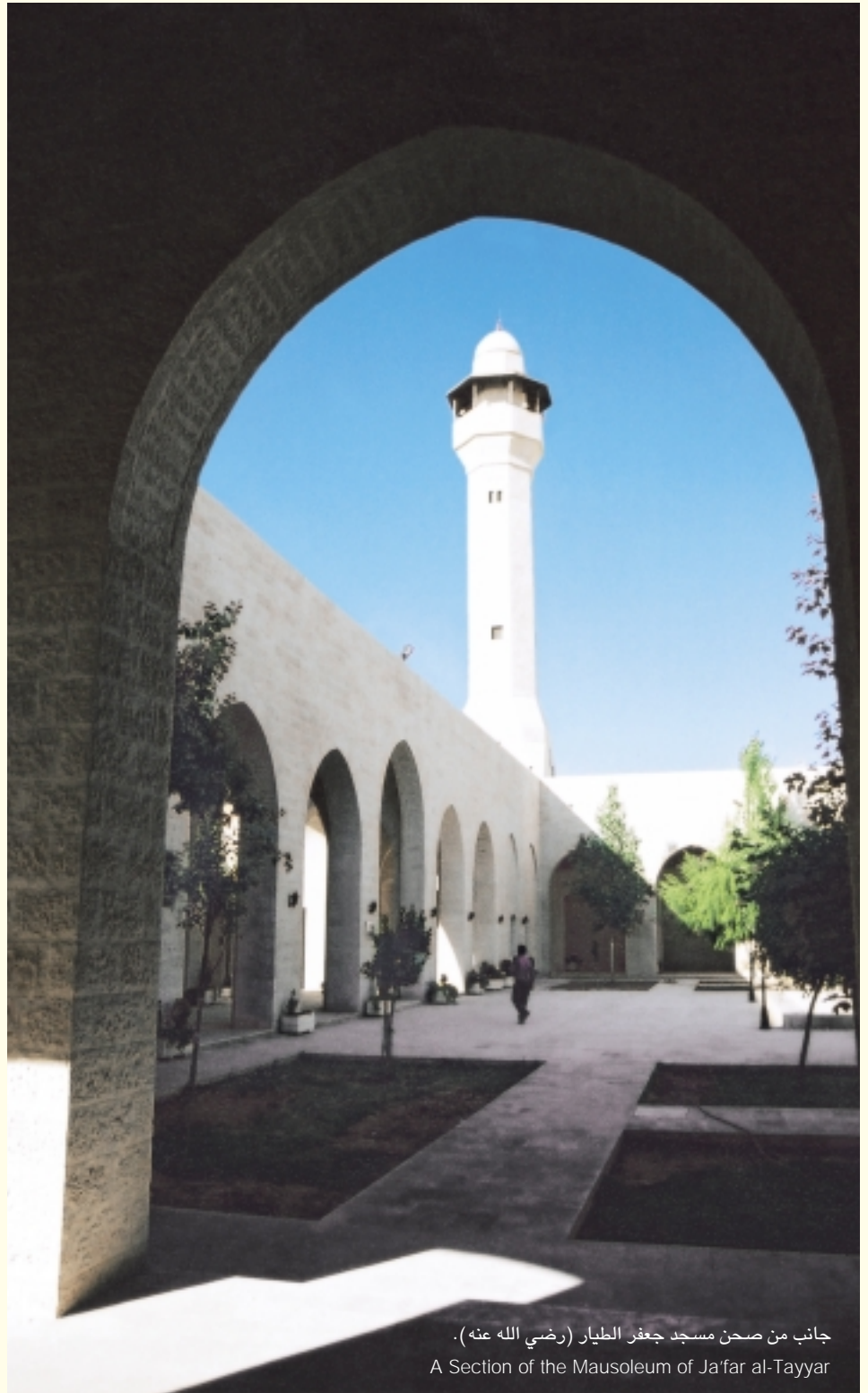
The Battle of Mou'ta occurred in Kerak in what is today the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The three nobles settled here at the time of the Prophetic Mission included **Ja'far al-Tayyar**, who is particularly revered by Shi'a Muslims the world over, along with his two brothers - also martyrs - Zayd and Abdullah. **Ja'far al-Tayyar** was a cousin of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and brother of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph. **Ja'far al-Tayyar** is, furthermore, one of three who were despatched by the Holy Prophet to Africa (al-Habasha) with a group of immigrants who subsequently found sanctuary with the Christian king, the Negus of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), al-Najashi. The Quraysh, who at the time were persecuting the followers of Muhammad, had sent a mission, headed by Amr ibn al-Aas, to force the Muslims back to Mecca but the Negus protected them.

In the Battle of Mou'ta, **Ja'far al-Tayyar** faced death bravely as he held the Islamic ensign in his right hand, and when that was severed, in his left hand, and when that too was severed, hugging it to his chest and calling on the retreating Muslims to think of the rewards of Paradise.

**Ja'far al-Tayyar** was known for his generosity, and was referred to by the Holy Prophet as "father of the poor", according to a tradition related from Abu Hurayra.

**Ja'far** was also a good speaker and skilful politically, a fact shown by how he overcame al-Aas, whose instructions to return the group of refugees back to Mecca failed.

The Holy Prophet was fond of **Ja'far al-Tayyar** and did not hide his sadness when ➤



جانب من صحن مسجد جعفر الطيار (رضي الله عنه).

A Section of the Mausoleum of Ja'far al-Tayyar

the latter was martyred. Indeed, the Holy Prophet is said to have stated: "All the weepers shall weep for **Ja'far**".

The Holy Prophet had also shown remarkable gladness when **Ja'far al-Tayyar** returned from Africa, at the time that the Muslims were raising the forts at the Battle of Khyber against the Jewish tribes. Muhammad is related to have said, "I do not know for which I shall be more pleased, **Ja'far's** return or victory over the Jews".

**Ja'far** died when he was 39 years of age, and the title **al-Tayyar** was conferred upon him via the Holy Prophet who was informed by God's angels that he had been killed with both hands severed whilst in defence of the Islamic faith, just as the family of the Holy Prophet would do.



The second martyr of Mou'ta is **Zayd ibn Haritha** who was from the first group who expressed their belief in the Islamic mission. He too was liked very much by the Holy Prophet, and was referred to as a "beloved of the Prophet Muhammad".

**Zayd** had been adopted by the Holy Prophet before the revelations.

**Zayd's** love of the Holy Prophet was shown in his choosing Muhammad over his own father or uncle or other member of his own immediate family.

Whilst **Zayd** was popularly known as **Zayd bin Muhammad**, the Holy Prophet referred to him as **Zayd ibn Haritha**. He is uniquely honoured by being mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (al-Ahzab, 37).

The place of **Zayd** is distinguished by its height, which can be seen from as far away as the eastern side. It is situated beside the eastern gate of the mosque which is attached to the mausoleum building by a unique open gallery that equals in impressiveness the open gallery of **Ja'far**.



The Holy Prophet asked for Zaynab bint Jahsh's hand in marriage to **Zayd**, but she refused on the basis of custom practised prior to the advent of Islam. How could she, the noblewoman from Quraysh, marry an adopted man? But after a revelation relating directly to **Zayd** and the issue of adopted persons (al-Ahzab, 36), she agreed to the marriage.

**Zayd** participated, under instructions from the Holy Prophet, as the leader of a brigade in each battle that was fought by the early followers of Islam.

Mou'ta, where he died as a martyr, was his last battle.

**Abdullah ibn Rawahah** was the third martyr of Mou'ta. He too was very close to the Holy Prophet and an honoured friend. He was a poet of his own clan, but thereafter and until his death became the Holy Prophet's poet, defending Islam and saving the Holy Prophet from harm, along with his two friends, Hassan bin Thabit and Ka'b ibn Zuhayr. **Abdullah** was, above all, a loyal soldier.

He is described in related traditions as "the first attacker and the last returner".

At the Battle of Mou'ta the Muslim army knew that they faced the Gassassinah

who numbered approximately 200,000 soldiers, and were hesitant to move forward. **Abdullah** decided that they would face the enemy and is reported to have said: "I swear by God, that the thing you hate is the same thing that you are seeking, martyrdom. We are not fighting the enemy by number or weaponry, we are fighting with religion [faith] which God has honoured us with", and the army responded positively to him.

When his two friends were killed during the battle, **Abdullah** took control of the leadership of the Muslim forces and attacked the enemy until his own death.

The Hashemite Building of **Ja'far ibn Abi Talib**

Mosque and Mausoleums of the Martyrs of Mou'ta

In 1997, the late King Hussein of Jordan ordered the building of monuments, mausoleums, mosques and sites in honour of companions of the Holy Prophet as important places of Islamic and historical interest. This programme included the building of the memorials to the leaders of Mou'ta. These structures included: ➔

### The Ja'far ibn Abi Talib Mosque

This is the main building of the project. It is built in stone and comprises a main dome over the prayer hall in addition to two minarets that are each 38 meters in height on both sides of the grounds of the mosque. The prayer hall has a total area of 1,500 square meters, and another small hall is 100 sq.m, which covers part of the prayer hall itself. The grounds of the mosque are surrounded by open galleries, including main gates.

Bathrooms and public services are nearby to serve increasing numbers of visitors, and the area also includes a small clinic which lies at the north-west corner of the mosque. The main gate for men is on the northern side, which shows the mausoleum of **Ja'far** and its gardens. The second gate is attached with the mausoleum of his family, including a chain of historical houses belonging to them. The third gate is on the western side, which is attached to the commercial market near to the mosque.

The building is mainly stone, a rich material that illustrates well the importance and the continuity of the building and structures, including gates, domes, floors, minarets and arches, all the elements working together to show off its essential beauty.

The unique functional element of this building is the natural supplement of fresh air and moisture through the northern side of the mosque. The air penetrates the mosque directly to the internal southern side (where the *Kiblah* - direction of prayer - is situated).

There is a glass heater to pull over hot air and replace it with cool air, an alternative to using modern air conditioners.

### The Mausoleum and Gardens of Ja'far

This is situated outside the prayer hall to enable visitors to enter the mausoleum without having to go inside the mosque and disturb worshippers. A unique open gallery is attached thereto.

The mausoleum occupies a central and strategic place within the overall structural system.

### Mausoleum and Gardens of the Honoured Zayd ibn Haritha

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which is attached to the mausoleum building by a unique open gallery that equals in impressiveness the open gallery of **Ja'far**.



مقام جعفر الطيار (رضي الله عنه).  
Inside the Mausoleum of Ja'far al-Tayyar

The visitor can enter the mausoleum through three places, and there are steps to a small garden surrounded with open galleries.

### The Fountain and Neighbouring Buildings

Great care was taken in the construction of project to design a drinking fountain that allows passers-by to refresh themselves with water. The neighbourhood of the mausoleums contains hostels for the convenience of visitors.

### The Commercial Market

As in Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo and other Islamic cities, it was necessary to have all the modern functional elements integrated into the project to give it character and life, and this is gauged through the commercial activity that takes place next to the mosque which overlooks one of the main streets that is a thoroughfare between the city of Kerak and the capital, Amman, and which also provides convenient routes to the villages of Mazar.

The commercial market can also be described as the cohesive element between the religious and spiritual

aspects of the city.

The area is a hive of activity, with a library, antiques stores, handicraft stores, shops selling copies of the Holy Qur'an along

with rosaries, prayer mats and other religious artefacts, a travel and tourism office, plant and flower sellers, a post office, perfume and incense vendors, a studio for selling and developing camera films, and places selling gifts and souvenirs.

### The Imam and Muezzin Residences

The houses of the imams and muezzins are situated in the upper parts of the commercial market via private steps that allow easy access for imams and muezzins to carry out their religious functions and duties.

### The 2nd Stage of the Hashemite Building Project at Mou'ta

The second stage of the Hashemite project will include the rebuilding of the mausoleum of **Abdullah ibn Rawaha**, the Asharia School, a hall for various purposes, and a library. It stretches through open galleries surrounded by a chain of lush gardens named after the twelve martyrs of Mou'ta. The gardens will lead to a view of the area in Mou'ta where the actual battle took place, and the visitor will be able to move through this area on horse-drawn carriages. ■