ZUROUNA زورونا

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Congratulations to the 2008 MED Scholarship Winners and Graduates

The MED awards are given every year to MED graduates from high schools and colleges who clearly demonstrated academic excellence, leadership, character, and community service. The MED scholarship is a one-time, non-renewable financial award. The college graduates receive a certificate of appreciation for their accomplishments. In addition, this year we recognized the MED youths who have been promoted to Middle and High schools and also given certificate of appreciations. The awards were given during our annual graduation party that was held on May 2nd at the Skyline Country Club resort. The graduation party has always been the most enjoyable MED party because of the pride we have to our MED young's who are demonstrating outstanding leadership and success in their schools. The graduates to middle and high schools were **Mary Sahyouni** (first from left), **David Basila Jr** (third from left). The High school graduate was **Jenny Hijazi** (second from the right) who is now a freshman at the University of Arizona. We also had one college graduate, **Samer Fayssal** (second from left) who received a Ph.D in Electrical and Computer Engineering (second from left) from UA. On behalf of the MED club, we wish you all fulfillment and happiness. Congratulations on your achievement.

I am the descendant of a people that builded Damascus, and Byblos, and Tyre and Sidon and Antioch, and now I am here to build with you, and with a will.

Kahlil Gibran

Table of Contents

- Fast Facts (2)
- Earthquakes (3)
- About Two Emperors of Roman Empire (4)
- Damascus (5,8)
- Graduation Party (6-7)
- Happy Events (99)
- Zaater (9)
- Zurouna Sponsors (10-12)

Facts about Syria and Lebanon

By Lana Hariri

- Lattakia, a port in Syria, is believed to be in existence since 400 BC.
- Damascus has been inhabited for over four thousand years, making it the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in the world.
- Syria's City of Aleppo, famous for its citadel, is said to be five thousand years old.
- Bath houses, or hammams, were built in Syria during Ottoman rule. Visiting hammams is popular among older men.
- Zenobia, the Queen of Palmyra, was famous for fighting against the Roman Empire.
- In ancient times Syria formed part of the area known as the Fertile Crescent.
- Syria became independent on 17 April 1946.
- Phoenicians were seafarers and traders. They used the North Star as a point of reference for navigation.
- The Phoenicians were famous for producing glass, purple dye and cedar wood.
- Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire for four hundred years.
- The Phoenicians, the ancient Lebanese, were the first to develop an alphabetic script in 1100 B.C. They did so to facilitate their prosperous trade further.
- Lebanon is the only country in the Middle East that does not have a desert
- There's 1 doctor per 10 people in Lebanon (In Europe & America, there's 1 doctor per 100 people)
- The Phoenicians built the 1st boat, and they were the first to sail ever
- There are 15 Rivers in Lebanon
- Beirut was destroyed and rebuilt seven times

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Earthquakes: Securing a Safer Future

By George Sahyouni, PhD, PE

On December 22, 2003, a magnitude 6.5 earthquake struck Central California, killing two, injuring 47, and damaging approximately 500 structures in a two county areas. Four days later, a magnitude 6.6 earthquake hit close to the ancient city of Bam, Iran, killing more than 43,000, injuring 30,000, and damaging or destroying up to 85 percent of the city's buildings infrastructure.

These two earthquakes, similar in magnitude with shockingly different outcomes, demonstrate in the starkest terms possible the importance of sound building codes and standards. California has been using increasingly stringent seismic building codes for both new and existing structures since 1927. In this same timeframe, Iran, among many other third world countries, has lacked a similar commitment to earthquake migration and structural retrofit programs. Bottom line: When disaster strikes, building to and enforcing codes prevents tragedies.

Through its contribution to the International Codes, the structural engineering community has provided the expertise to help make the future built environment more safe and secure. Of particular note, these professionals have directly contributed update of the wind- and earthquake- related building code provisions. It was a group of volunteer structural engineers that first published the Recommended Lateral Force Requirements and Commentary in 1959. That document, known as the Blue Book of the Structural Engineers Association of California (SEAOC Blue Book), served as the basis for most seismic code provisions in the United States and internationally until recently.

Iran Earthquakes	Description
June 2002:	More than 200 killed in the Western Qasvin and Hamedan regions
May 1997	More than 1,500 killed in eastern Iran
June 1990:	35,000 died in worst recorded disaster in Iran, affecting the Caspian regions of Gilan and Zanjan. About half a million people made homeless
June 1981	More than 1,000 killed in quake that destroyed town of Golbaf

China Earthquakes	Description
1976	estimated 650,000 people were killed
May 12, 2008	confirmed 69,197 people killed, 374,176 people injured, 18, 340 people missing

Additionally, The International Code Council (ICC) is working with diverse building safety professionals in the development of standards to provide enhanced public safety against hurricanes and tornadoes. Examples are the upcoming ICC Standard for Hurricane Resistant Construction (ISHRC), and the ICC Standard on Design, Construction, and Performance of Storm Shelters (IS-STM)."

Structural engineers are part of the best code design and implementation system in the world- a system as important to public safety as other essential services, such as the fire department. The more the public understands what the structural engineering profession has done to make communities safer, the more support there will be for still greater advancements.

As you may know, I lived a good part of my life in Syria, a beautiful country located just at the east cost of the Mediterranean Sea. I am also familiar with the materials, technologies, and construction methods that are still in practice over there. As a Senior Structural Engineer practicing here in Tucson, I can only pray with many others that The All Mighty may prevent a high magnitude earthquake from happening in the near future. This is also true, not only in Syria, but in most of the third world countries.

Finally, it is easy to forget, but we are all part of something that can help future generations- from California to the Middle East and beyond.

Almost 1750 years ago, two young men from Syria were Emperors of the Roman Empire during 218-235 AD.

By Lana Hariri

Varius Avitus Bassianus (aka Elagabalus)

Born Varius Avitus Bassianus, Elagabalus was one of the two Syrian Emperors during the early 200s. He was born in 203 AD in Emesa, Syria (modern day Homs). When he was a young boy, he served as a high priest to the Syrian God El-Gabal in Emesa. In 217 AD, the Emperor of Emesa was murdered and was replaced by another Emperor. However, Elagabalus's grandmother, Julia Maesa, wanted to plot revenge against the new Emperor so that Elagabalus could rule. The grandmother caused a revolt and on June 8th, 218, Elagabalus was now the Emperor at only fourteen years old. When he first came to the city, he brought with him low-class Syrians, who were now high class officers. That shocked the citizens, but what shocked them the most was when Elagabulus brought the Black Stone from Emesa to Rome. The Black Stone is the most sacred and holy object for the Syrian god El-Gabal. The Black Stone always resided in the temple and the Romans knew that even though he was Emperor, he still wanted to be a priest. After getting off to a bad start, Elagabalus wanted to redeem himself. His grandmother arranged a marriage where he would marry a woman of noble class. This did very little because his continued worship to the Syrian God ruined everything. He would sacrifice sheeps and cattle to the God and high Roman officials were forced to attend. Later on, he ended up marrying four more women and divorcing them all. His grandmother was furious and bribed soldiers to kill him. In 222 AD, Elagabalus and his mother were beheaded. He was 17 years old. And the Black Stone was sent back to Elmesa.

Alexander Bassianus

Born Marcus Julius Gessius Bassianus Alexianus, Alexander was the last Syrian Emperor. He was born in Arca Caesarea, Syria on October 1st, 208. Once he had heard that his first cousin, Elagabalus had been murdered, his grandmother (also Julia Maesa), quickly brought him to the throne. He was only about thirteen years old. Alexander was a good kid, amiable, and completely under the rule of his mother. She hired many wise counselors for her son and watched him grow. He married Sallustia Orbiana in 225, but divorced and exiled her in 227 because her father was executed for attempted murder on a former emperor. He was very open minded when it came to religion. He even wanted to create a church but was dissuaded by his counselors. Alexander was some-what victorious in battle. He defeated the Persians in 232 and this let him be in control of Mesopotamia. He returned to Rome and celebrated this important victory. A year later, he was called to face German invaders in Gaul, who had destroyed forts and over-ran the country side. Alexander called tribes and legions from all over. He wanted to buy the German tribes off, just to gain him some more time to build together his army. Whether this was a smart move or not, the Romans looked down on their Emperor as a coward and a fool. The Romans hired another leader and Alexander and his mother were killed by Roman soldiers in 235. Although not much is known about Syria's last Emperor, we are familiar with what he has left us. After his death, taxes were decreasing, literature, art, and music were more popular, and loan offices were formed so that they could loan money to people with slight interest.

Damascus: One of the Oldest Cities

By Katerina Hariri

Damascus (**Arabic:** دمشق, Arabic Dimashq, or ash-Sham الشام) is the capital and largest city of Syria. It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world before Al Fayyum, and Gaziantep. Its current population is estimated at about 1.67 million.

Ancient history

Excavations at Tell Ramad on the outskirts of the city have demonstrated that Damascus has been inhabited as early as 6,000 to 5,000 BC. It is due to this that Damascus is considered to be among the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. However, Damascus is not documented as an important city until the coming of the Aramaeans, Semitic nomads who arrived from Mesopotamia. It is known that it was the Aramaeans who first established the water distribution system of Damascus by constructing canals and tunnels which maximized the efficiency of the Barada river.

The same network was later improved by the Romans and the Umayyads, and still forms the basis of the water system of the old part of Damascus today. It was mentioned in Genesis 14 as existing at the time of the War of the Kings.

Greco-Roman

Bab Kisan, where Paul is said to have escaped from

Damascus first came under western control with the giant campaign of Alexander the Great that swept through the near east. After the death of Alexander in 323 BC, Damascus became the site of a struggle between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires. The control of the city passed frequently from one empire to the other. Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander's generals, had made Antioch the capital of his vast empire, a decision that led Damascus' importance to decline compared with the newly founded Seleucid cities such as Latakia in the north.

In 64 BC, the Roman general Pompey annexed the western part of Syria. The Romans occupied Damascus and subsequently incorporated it into the league of ten cities known as the Decapolis because it was considered such an important center of Greco-Roman culture. According to the New Testament, St. Paul was on the road to Damascus when he received a vision, was struck blind and as a result converted to Christianity. In the year 37, Roman Emperor Caligula transferred Damascus into Nabataean control by decree.[citation needed] The Nabataean king Aretas IV Philopatris ruled Damascus from his capital Petra. However, around the year 106, Nabataea was conquered by the Romans, and Damascus returned to Roman control.Damascus became a metropolis by the beginning of the second century and in 222 it was upgraded to a *colonia* by the Emperor Septimius Severus. During the *Pax Romana*, Damascus and the Roman province of Syria in general began to prosper. Damascus's importance as a caravan city was evident with the trade routes from southern Arabia, Palmyra, Petra, and the silk routes from China all converging on it. The city satisfied the Roman demands for eastern luxuries.

Bab Tuma gate

Little remains of the architecture of the Romans, but the town planning of the old city did have a lasting effect. The Roman architects brought together the Greek and Aramaean foundations of the city and fused them into a new layout measuring approximately 1,500 metres (4,900 ft) by 750 metres (2,500 ft), surrounded by a city wall. The city wall contained seven gates, but only the eastern gate (Bab Sharqi) remains from the Roman period. Roman Damascus lies mostly at depths of up to five meters (16.4 ft) below the modern city.

The old borough of Bab Tuma was developed at the end of the Roman/Byzantine era by the local Eastern Orthodox community. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Paul and Saint Thomas both lived in that neighborhood. Roman Catholic historians also consider Bab Tuma to be the birthplace of several Popes such as John V and Gregory III.

Continue on Page 8

MED Graduation Night on May 2nd, 2008

MED Graduation Party at Skyline Resort

Damascus (continue from page 5)

Islamic Arab rule

Damascus was conquered by the Rashidun Caliphate forces in 634 A.D. Immediately thereafter, the city's power and prestige reached its peak when it became the capital of the Umayyad Empire, which extended from Spain to India from 661 to 750. After the fall of the Umayyads and the establishment of the Abbasid caliphate in 750, Damascus was ruled from Baghdad, although in 858 al-Mutawakkil briefly established his residence there with the intention of transferring his capital there from Samarra. However, he soon abandoned the idea. As the Abbasid caliphate declined, Damascus suffered from the prevailing instability, and came under the control of local dynasties. In 875 the ruler of Egypt, Ahmad ibn Tulun, took the city, with Abbasid control being re-established only in 905. In 945 the Hamdanids took Damascus, and not long after it passed into the hands of Muhammad bin Tughj, founder of the Ikhshidid dynasty. In 968 and again in 971 the city was briefly captured by the Qaramita.

House of Saint Ananisas

Historical Sites

Damascus has a wealth of historical sites dating back to many different periods of the city's history. Since the city has been built up with every passing occupation, it has become almost impossible to excavate all the ruins of Damascus that lie up to 8 feet (2.4 m) below the modern level.

The Citadel of Damascus is located in the northwest corner of the Old City. The *Street Called Straight* (referred to in the conversion of St. Paul in Acts 9:11), also known as the *Via Recta*, was the decumanus (East-West main street) of Roman Damascus, and extended for over 1,500 meters (4,900 ft). Today, it consists of the street of Bab Sharqi and the Souk Medhat Pasha, a covered market. The Bab Sharqi street is filled with small shops and leads to the old Christian quarter of Bab Tuma (St. Thomas's Gate). Souk Medhat Pasha is also a main market in Damascus and was named after Medhat Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Syria who renovated the Souk. At the end of the Bab Sharqi street, one reaches the House of Ananias, an underground chapel that was the cellar of Ananias's house.

Shrine of John the Baptist

The Umayyad Mosque, also known as the Grand Mosque of Damascus, is one of the largest mosques in the world, and one of the oldest sites of continuous prayer since the rise of Islam. A shrine in the mosque is said to contain the head of John the Baptist. The mausoleum where Saladin was buried is located in the gardens just outside the mosque.

A heavily visited site is the tomb of Zaynab bint Ali. Hundreds of thousands of Shia Muslims visit it every year.

Ummayad Mosque

The walls and gates of Damascus

The Old City of Damascus is surrounded by ramparts on the northern and eastern sides and part of the southern side. There are seven extant city gates, the oldest of which dates back to the Roman period. These are, clockwise from the north of the citadel: Bab al-Faraj ("the gate of deliverance"), Bab al-Faradis ("the gate of the orchards", or "of the paradise"), Bab al-Salam ("the gate of peace"), all on the north boundary of the Old City, Bab Tuma ("Touma" or "Thomas's Gate") in the north-east corner, leading into the Christian quarter of the same name, Bab Sharqi ("eastern gate") in the east wall, the only one to retain its Roman plan, Bab Kisan in the south-east, from which tradition holds that Saint Paul made his escape from Damascus, lowered from the ramparts in a basket; this gate is now closed and a chapel marking the event has been built into the structure, Bab al-Jabiya at the entrance to Souk Midhat Pasha, in the south-west. Two other areas outside the walled city also bear the name "gate": Bab Mousalla and Bab Sreija, both to the south-west of the walled city.

Shrine of Zaynab bint Ali

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damascus

Happy Events

Birthdays

August

Ayla Rizk, 3rd
Elham Lahood 18th
Julie Michael 13th
Sharjamme Davis, 25th
Anthony Nassif, 27th

September

Bshara Mezher 1st
Gabriel Sarah, 1st
Wadia Sarah, 1st
Mary Sahyouni, 6th
Hannah Sarah, 13th
Kim Callan, 18th
Pete Davis, 22nd
Domingo Cheleuitte 26th
Andera Moussa, 28th
Luke Moussa 30th

October

Josephine Sabbagh 10th
Michael Moussa, 13th
David Basila 21st
Amer Said 23th
Marge Yessian 23rd
Jamil Hijazi 27th
Angelle Casagrande 28th
Youmna Abdulhadi, 28th

Novemeber

Michael Abraham, 2nd
Rebecca Shapiro, 4th
George Hobeich 5th
Carmen Moussa 6th
Cristina Casagrande, 18th
Sonia Hariri 21st
Tarek Nassif, 23th
Adel Ziady 25th
Mikey Moussa 26th
Kelly Callan 27th
Nicole Lahood 30th

Anniversaries

Hannah and Wadia Sarah, 8/1
Richard and Julie Michaels, 8/13
Salim & Sonia Hariri 11/17

Za'atar (Arabic: (زعتر)

By Talal Moukabary

Za'atar (Arabic: (زعتر) is a mixture of herbs and spices used as a condiment with Middle Eastern origins. The name of the condiment shares the Arabic name of the herb used as the main ingredient. Latin names for the herbs called za'atar include Origanum majorana (sweet marjoram), Origanum syriacum (also known as Bible hyssop, Syrian oregano and wild marjoram), and Thymus capitatus (thyme). Za'atar barri ("wild za'atar") is identified as Origanum vulgare which in English can refer to European oregano, oregano, pot marjoram, wild marjoram, winter majoram, and wintersweet. Both oregano and marjoram are closely related Mediterranean plants of the Labiatae family which also includes mint and sage, so it is unsurprising that these herbs are commonly used as substitutes for one another.

Za'atar is generally prepared using ground dried thyme, oregano, marjoram, or some combination thereof, mixed with toasted sesame seeds, and salt. Some varieties may add savory, cumin, coriander or fennel seed. A Lebanese variety of Za'atar usually contains sumac berries, and has a distinct dark red color.
Za'atar is popular both as an herb and as a condiment in Armenia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian territories, Syria, and Turkey. It is eaten for breakfast alongside a cheese made of yogurt with bread throughout the Arab world, but most predominantly in Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria.

Za'atar is used as a seasoning for meats and vegetables. It can be mixed with olive oil to make a spread called za'atar-wu-zayt as a dip for the sesame bread rings known as ka'ak. Za'atar can also be spread on a dough base and baked as a bread, in which case it is called manaeesh bi zaatar (Arabic مناقيش زعتر). It can be sprinkled on labneh (yogurt that has been drained until it becomes a tangy, creamy cheese). Za'atar is often sprinkled on hummus or served with olive oil as a spread or dip. It can also be used to spice meat and vegetables and can be mixed with salt, rolled into balls and preserved in oil, or dried in the sun.

Common belief claims that a za'atar is a memory aid, an antiseptic, a cure for intestinal parasites and a remedy for common cold, loss of appetite and flatulence.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Za%27atar

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Kahlil Gibran

"You should be proud of being an American, but you should also be proud that your fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid His gracious hand and raised His messengers."

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