

bazaar

the legend of the 99 begins.

Meet the first Islamic superheroes

In the year 1258, the Mongols invaded Baghdad with a sole purpose - to destroy their legacy of wisdom and thus put an end to their progress. Hulagu Khan's armies slaughtered thousands of innocents in a matter of a few days and brought to dust the great libraries of Baghdad.

However, according to legend, a most remarkable plan was set in motion by the ancient scholars of Baghdad, to save all of the knowledge. Hiding all of the information in 99 mystical gemstones, they set out to build a new, safe haven in Granada. These heroes of old, these Huras Al-Hikma, pledged to dedicate their lives to the pursuit and protection of wisdom.

...And so the great Fortress of Knowledge - the Husn Al Ma'rifat was built. Assembled over three generations, its construction was completed with the placement of the 99 gems within the fortress' dome. To the amazement of all, the saturated stones reflected rays within the fortress - rays of colour no human eye had ever beheld. However, it was the Guardian Rughal who unlocked the true secrets of the 99 jewels. He discovered that they wielded a force far more powerful than the revelation of wisdom. A select few, when exposed to the rays, exhibited an array of paranormal powers and physical transformations albeit only for a few hours. Rughal purposed within himself to explore the full potential of the gemstones.

In the year 1488, news of King Ferdinand's approaching Spanish army reached the ears of the Huras. Rughal conceived of a desperate plan - secretly entering the area of the dome, he prepared himself to be the recipient of the combined rays of the jewels. Legend tells us of that night - that it was Rughal's screams that awakened all who dwell in the fortress. The building itself erupted a moment later and the deafening explosion could be heard for miles around. Rughal was nowhere to be seen and none could tell what had happened to him...

Before long, the Spanish army attacked... and the Huras scattered



themselves across the globe, carrying with them the precious jewels. And there the light of the world remained, lost to mankind - until now.

Doctor Ramzi Razem has known the legend of the Huras ever since early childhood. His grandfather had told him of the great wars, the books, the fortress - the jewels. The old man had even claimed that they were descendant of the original Huras Al-Hikma. Now an adult, Ramzi has searched across the globe for many years, for any evidence to support what he knows to be true. Years of searching are about to yield their harvest as he finds the first of a whole barrage of superheroes - men,

women and children who have in one way or another come into possession of a jewel that is quite unique. They are a new breed, birthed from an old world and the future is in their hands. They are The 99 and their time is now. ...But it is not only light that has lain asleep all these years...

And so the story of The 99 begins...

The 99 is the brainchild of Teshkeel Media Group, who are perhaps best known for publishing Arabic language versions of Marvel and Archie titles in the MENA region. The 99, Teshkeel's flagship property, will be the first original title, published under the Teshkeel Comics imprint.



They also happen to be the world's first superheroes conceived from Islamic culture. After working at Bellevue Hospital in the Survivors of Political Torture Unit with patients from West Africa and the Middle East - predominantly Muslim populations, Dr. Al-Mutawa, Teshkeel's CEO realized that as a culture, we have historical figures that are revered, but we don't have any modern-day heroes. It was then that he decided he wanted to create heroes that are based on our culture.

The concept of The 99 is based on the 99 attributes of God in Islam. Many of these names refer to characteristics that can be possessed by human individuals. For example - generosity, strength, faithfulness, and wisdom are all virtues encouraged by a number of faiths.

And if you're thinking the world already has enough superheroes, think again. 99 virtuous "problem-solvers" are ready to give western superheroes a run for their money. From Jabbar the Powerful, a 19 year old Saudi boy who has superhuman strength, to Noora the Light, a spoiled daddy's girl from the Emirates who possesses the power to see truth in people, and even Darr the Afflicter, a young American man pissed off at the world from being paralyzed in a car crash, only to manifest the power to stimulate pain after receiving one of the gems as a healing stone.

Those are just to name a few, members of The 99 are all ordinary teenagers and adults from across the globe who each come into possession of one of the 99 mystical Noor Stones and find themselves empowered in a specific manner.

Dilemmas faced by The 99 will be overcome through the combined powers of three or more members. Through this, The 99 series aims to promote values such as cooperation and unity throughout the Islamic world. So although the series is not religious, it aims to communicate Islamic virtues, which are universal in nature. The 64-page special origins issue is in stores now but stay tuned - by next Ramadan, the world will have new heroes. Check out www.the99.org for more information.