

PAST MASTER SERIES: **Jaber ibn Hayyan**



Jaber ibn Hayyan (Geber), became an alchemist at the court of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, for whom he wrote the *Kitab al-Zuhra* ("The Book of Venus", on "the noble art of alchemy").

He is known world-wide as "the Father of Chemistry. In total, nearly 3,000 treatises and articles are credited to Jabir ibn Hayyan. More than 500 of his works have been put into print and are for the most part to be found among the treasures of the National Libraries of Paris and Berlin. Europe nicknamed him "Wisdom's Professor" and attribute him the discovery of 19 of the elements with their specific weights. Jaber said, "Everything could be traced back to a simple basic particle composed of a charge of lightning (electricity) and fire, the atom, or smallest indivisible unit of matter."

He emphasized systematic experimentation. He is credited with the invention of over twenty types of now-basic chemical laboratory equipment, such as the alembic and retort, and with the discovery and description of many now-commonplace chemical substances and processes – such as the hydrochloric and nitric acids, distillation, and crystallization – that have become the foundation of today's chemistry and chemical engineering.