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Zakat or Zakat زکاة: One of the five pillars of Islam is *zakat* which literally means "purification", an increment of one's wealth. A Muslim who has money beyond a certain quantity is to pay *zakat*. It is also called "alms dues" or "poor dues" except it is not optional. It is to be distributed for specific categories for the welfare of the society.

These categories are mentioned in the Qur'an which include: the poor, the needy, the destitutes, the captives, the ones in debt, in the cause of Allah, the wayfarers and for those who collect it. Literally, it means "purification;" it is a compulsory 2.5% tax on one of three categories of wealth 1) metal coins (gold, silver, etc.), 2) grain crops (barley, wheat, grain, rice, etc.), and 3) animals raised for food consumption. *Zakiat* is somehow a complicated subject. For details, the readers are advised to consult books dealing with *fiqh*.

Among its types are: *zakat al-mal* (taxable wealth accumulated during one full year) and *zakat al-fitr* (a tax to be paid by the head of a household at the end of the fast of the month of Ramaan).

Zaman or Dhamaan ضمان: guarantee, security, guaranty, warranty; variations: ضمان لمحكمه guarantee, security, guaranty, warranty; variations: ضمان سلوك security for good behavior; ضمان إضافي collateral security; ضمان لياقة personal security; ضمان عقاري real estate security; ضمان مطلق absolute warranty of fitness; ضمان لبيان warranty of fitness; ضمان مطلق absolute guaranty

Zawaj زواج: marriage, legal, legitimate and permissible cohabitation; spouses are: **Zawj زوج** husband and **Zawja زوجة** wife

Zawal زوال: disappearance, passage, lapse, discontinuance. It also refers to the certain times related to the position of the sun: It may be a sunset غروب or midday, meridian منتصف النهار.

Zendiq or Zindiq or Zindeeq زنديق: heretic, one who believes neither in the Unity of the Creator (*Tawhid*) nor in the Hereafter, one who goes so far into innovated and deviant beliefs and senseless sophistry without sticking to the truth which is already stated in the Qur'an and the Sunna to such an extreme extent that he actually leaves Islam altogether.

According to *Lisan al-Arab* lexicon by Ibn Manzour, this word is not originally Arabic; its root is the Persian *zand-kirai* which means one who believes that life is eternal and that there is no life hereafter.

Zihar زیهار: the making of a similitude between the back of one's wife and that of his mother; i.e. saying that his wife's back looks similar to his mother's back, a custom followed during the time of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) which Islam banned; doing so implied that such a wife was divorced.

Ziyara زیارت: visit, social get-together. A pilgrimage to a holy site other than Mecca and Medina is also called Ziyara and the one who performs it is a **Zair** زائر.

Zuha ضحی: afternoon; also: title of Chapter 93 of the Holy Qur'an which comprised of 11 verses.

Zuhr or Dhuhr ظهر: the obligatory *salat*, prayer, performed in the afternoon right after the sun moves away from its zenith

Zuhoor or Zuhur ظہور: Its simple meaning is "the appearing", or the coming out. If you give it the definite article "the" and make it الظہور, you will be referring to the time when the Awaited One, the Mahdi, the Living 12th Imam (ع) comes out of his occultation, concealment, and starts working on filling the earth with justice and ease after being filled with injustice, oppression and depression, and there will be so much prosperity that nobody will be needy.

Any research about this reappearance of al-Mahdi (ع) cannot be covered fully and fairly except by a voluminous book. But let me give you few thoughts to consider about this momentous event: Just as there is One God, call Him Allah, Khuda, Diu, Jehovah, or whatever, for He is One and the same, there is also one single family that descended from Adam and Eve, our extended human family. And there is only one truth: It is revealed to nations each according to its history, culture, traditions, ways of life and levels of sophistication.

Likewise, there is one and only one Awaited Savior: The Christians believe he will be Christ re-incarnated, the Jews believe he will be one of the descendants of Prophet David, peace be with him, while other religions refer to a savior of some sort. Just as the Creator has many names, so does this savior. In Islam, he is al-Mahdi (ع), the guided one, the guide.

Let us tell you a little about this great personality: Imam al-Mahdi (ع) was born to the 11th Imam, Muhammad son of Hassan al-'Askari, who is buried in Samarra, Iraq, in what is now known world-wide as the "Askari Shrine" which was bombed by Wahhabi Takfiri terrorists on Wednesday, February 22, 2006, an event which almost hurled the Iraqis into the inferno of civil war. This shrine, which is now being rebuilt, has always been visited by the faithful from various parts of the world, so much so that plans are now underway to build an international airport in Samarra to cater to the influx of these pilgrims.

His mother is Lady Nerjis Khatun, granddaughter of the Imam al-Askari's contemporary Byzantine king

who was a descendant of prophet Sham`un or Simon, trustee of Jesus Christ. Imam al-Mahdi (ع) was born on the 15th of Sha`ban of 255 A.H./July 29, 869 A.D. and became the Imam following the martyrdom of his revered father in 260 A.H./874 A.D. when he was only five. Do not be surprised and ask: How can a boy who is only five years old be an Imam?! Let me remind you that Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) was a prophet even when he was a child with neither a beard nor a moustache. The Almighty can do anything at all.

His period of Imamate lasted till the year 260 A.H./874 A.D. He went into the "minor occultation", that is, not appearing in public so he would not be a target of the enemies of the Prophet's family from among those who ruled the Muslims in the name of "Islam" (and there are some of such people living even in our time), during the period which extended from 260 to 329 A.H. (874 – 941 A.D.).

During this period, he had deputies or representatives who acted as liaisons between him and the public and their names and biographies are available for review in books which discuss the Imam (ع).

After 329 A.H./874 A.D., it was too dangerous for anyone to represent the Imam (ع) even to his followers, so he went into the period of the "major occultation" which extended from 329 A.H./941 A.D. to our time and will continue till his re-appearance which many Islamic scholars now stress will be very soon especially since the signs marking his re-appearance, as recorded in Sunnah books, have already materialized, and there is no room to detail them here. Where will the Imam (ع) reappear? His reappearance will be in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and it will be seen on television screens all over the world.

He will lead a campaign to purge the Islamic world of all those who do not deserve to live on our planet then establish alliances with non-Muslim countries based on mutual respect and brotherhood, and these non-Muslims will for the first time feel fully secure. We believe that he will reappear accompanied by prophet Jesus Christ so the whole world will see how close these two religions are to each other, and Christ will dissociate himself from all those who throughout the centuries played havoc with the pristine divine message which he had brought the world.

We must add that there have been many imposters each one of whom claimed to be Imam al-Mahdi (ع) in both Shiite and Sunni societies, but their falsehood was bared before the world, and most likely there will be many more in the future as well till the real Imam al-Mahdi (ع) appears to start his global revolution in defense of the poor, rightousness, justice, equality and toleration.

A lengthy tradition (*hadith* حديث) quoted in the classic reference *Thawab al-A'mal* ثواب الأعمال cites Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (ع) quoting the Messenger of Allah (ص) saying, "Time will come to my nation during which their inwardly intentions are bad while they display good attitudes only because they covet this life and they do not desire what Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, has. They will have pretension without fear, so much so that they will be blinded by Allah with penalty from Him, whereupon they will plead to him like one about to drown, but He will not respond to their plea."

Another tradition in the same source quotes the Messenger of Allah (ص) as having said, "Time will come

upon my nation (Muslims) during which nothing remains of the Qur'an except its form, nor of Islam except its name. They are called Muslims while they are the furthermost of people from it: Their mosques are crowded, yet they lack guidance. The *faqihs* فقهاء (jurists) of that time will be the worst under the sky; from them did فتنه strife begin, and to them it shall return."

In the classic reference *Ikmal ad-Deen* إكمال الدين, we read the following tradition quoted from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (ع), father of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (ع), saying, "Al-Qa'im القائم (one of the titles of Imam al-Mahdi (ع)) will be supported with fear (in the hearts of his opponents), backed by victory; distances in the earth will be shortened for him; treasures will appear for him, and his authority will reach the east and the west. Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, will let His creed (Islam) be the uppermost through him though the infidels abhor it. There will be no ruin on earth without being repaired. And Ruhullah روح الله Jesus Christ will descend and pray behind him.

This will happen when men will look like women and women will imitate men, when a man is satisfied [sexually] by a man and a woman by a woman, when females ride and false witnesses are accepted by courts while those of just men will be rejected, when people take bloodletting lightly, when adultery is committed and usury is consumed, when evildoers are avoided for fear of what they would say, when the Sufyani comes out of Syria and the Yemani out of Yemen, when the desert gapes out and a young man from among the descendants of Muhammad (ص) is killed between the Rukn and the Maqam (in Holy Ka'ba) named Muhammad son of al-Hassan, a man of a pure soul, and when a cry comes out of the sky that he is a man of the truth and so are his followers; it is then when our Qa'im القائم comes out (of his occultation). So, when he comes out, he will recline his back on the Ka`ba, and 313 men will join him. The first that he will articulate is this verse:

'That which is left by Allah for you is good for you, if you are believers' (Qur'an, 11:86).

He will then say, 'I am what is left by Allah for you in His land.' When the full number of his supporters is complete, which is 10,000 men, anything worshipped on earth other than Allah, the most Exalted One, the most Great, such as idols and other things, is set on fire and is burnt. This will take place after a long period of occultation so Allah may ascertain who obeys Him in the unseen and who believes in Him."

There are numerous theories surrounding this reappearance of al-Mahdi (ع); some of them make some sense whereas others make some sense to some people and none to others, depending on people's level of understanding. One of these theories says that there will be major sites where vital roles will be played, all related to this reappearance. These include: Yemen, Hijaz (Saudi Arabia), Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Europe. Apparently, very significant events will take place in all these countries. This theory goes on to state that allies in Yemen will stage a revolution only a couple of months before the reappearance, which is commonly referred to as the Zuhoor ظهور.

These Yemenites will fill up the political vacuum in Hijaz (Saudi Arabia) and will also assist the Imam (ع) in his sweeping revolution. The reason for this vacuum will be the death of King Abdullah who is

currently the ruler of Saudi Arabia. This Abdullah is supposed to be the last monarch to rule Hijaz and Nejd (the two main parts of Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world named after its ruling clan).

After him, there will be a huge fight for the inheritance of the throne. The fight for the throne will go on till the advent of our Imam (ع). The monarchist system that has been ruling Saudi Arabia since 1932 will be reduced to few months. There shall be constant clashes among the tribes in Hijaz after the death of King Abdullah, and one person amongst these rulers will ruthlessly murder 15 important leaders or famous `ulema, scholars, and their sons who belong to his opponent's tribe.

More details about al-Mahdi (ع) are provided above under the item "Mahdi, al-" to which you may refer if you wish.

We pray the Almighty to hasten the reappearance of our Hidden Imam, al-Hujja, al-Mahdi (ع), and to count us among his soldiers who defend his message and to bless the humble effort exerted in putting this book together, Ameen.

And surely Allah knows best.

ربنا تقبل منا، إنك أنت السميع العليم

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