

Istikhārah

Istikhārah means seeking Allah's guidance to make a decision concerning something. It is a Sunnah which the Prophet (ﷺ) prescribed for anyone who wants to do something permissible but is not sure whether or not it would actually be good for him or her. It means turning to Allah and seeking guidance as to what He knows is best and most appropriate. The istikhārah is a practical demonstration that one has no complete knowledge and no power of his own. It expresses submission to the decree of Allah while seeking to combine the good of this world and the Hereafter.

Jābir reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to teach his companions to do the istikhārah in all matters, just as he used to teach them sūrahs from the Qur'ān. He (ﷺ) said: "If any one of you is deliberating about a decision he has to make, then let him pray two rak'ahs of prayer other than the obligatory one and then say:

'Allāhumma innee astakheeruka bi-'ilmika wa astaqdiruka bi-qudratika wa as'aluka min fadhlik al-kareem. Fa innaka taqdiru wa lā aqdiru, wa ta'lamu wa lā a'lamu, wa anta 'allām ul-ghuyūb. Allāhumma in kunta ta'lamu anna hādhal-amra [naming the matter] khayran lee fee deenee wa ma'āshee wa 'aaqibati amree, faqdurhu lee wa yassirhu lee thumma bārik lee feeh. Wa in kunta ta'lamu anna hādhal-amra sharrun lee fee deenee wa ma'āshee wa 'aaqibati amree fasrifhu 'annee wasrifni 'anhu waqdur lee al-khayra haythu kāna; thumm-ardhinee bih.'"

Meaning: O Allah, I ask for Your decision by Your knowledge and Your decree by Your ability, and I ask of You from Your great favor. For You are able and I am not able, and You know and I do not know, and You are the Knower of things concealed. O Allah, if You have known that this matter [naming it here] is good for me in my religion, my livelihood and the outcome of my affair, then decree it for me, make it easy for me and then bless it for me. And if You have known that this matter is bad for me in my religion, my livelihood and the outcome of my affair, then turn it away from me and turn me away from it, and decree for me what is good wherever it may be; and then make me content with it.

(Narrated by al-Bukhari)

This du'aa' may be recited before the salām or after it, and istikhārah may be done at any time of the day or night. After a person has prayed istikhārah about a certain matter he should begin with it. If it is good Allah will facilitate it and if not, He will divert it from him.

In matters where it is known that something is obligatory, ḥarām (forbidden) or makrooh (disliked in the religion) one does not pray istikhārah. Rather, istikhārah has to do only with things that are permissible.

The one who is considering a matter should do istikhārah himself and not ask others to do it on his behalf. It is permissible but not usually necessary to repeat the istikhārah more than once. The response is not necessarily seen in a dream or any other sign, and may not be immediate. It comes in the ease with which the matter is completed or in its obstruction by Allah. Perfect faith and trust in Allah means entrusting one's affairs to Him and accepting His decision.