



# Istikhārah<sup>1</sup> - a means of expressing, developing, and enhancing Tawakkul

## Importance

Allah *Ta'ālā* has complete and perfect knowledge. His knowledge is all-encompassing. He knows what is beneficial for us and what is harmful to us. We should therefore *consult* Allah *Ta'ālā* in all our matters.

Ibn al-Qayyim says: "The person who makes Istikhārah (seeks good) from his Creator and makes mashwarah (consults) with the creation never regrets, since Allah *Ta'ālā* said to His Nabī *Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam*: *Consult them in matters. Then, when You have made a decision, place your trust in Allah.*"<sup>2</sup>

## Benefits

Rasūlullāh *Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam* said: "From the good fortune of man is seeking goodness from Allāh and being pleased with His decision, and from his misfortune is discarding seeking goodness from Allāh and being unhappy after the decree."<sup>3</sup>

Shāh Waliyullāh writes, "From among the greatest benefits of Istikhārah is that man becomes detached from his carnal desires, his animalistic characteristics become subject to his angelic nature, and he hands himself over to Allah. I believe that frequent Istikhārah is a proven tonic for the inculcation of angelic qualities."<sup>4</sup>

The du'ā of Istikhārah teaches us Tawakkul, Tafwīḍ and Raḍā'. Istikhārah strengthens a person's connection with Allah. Through excessive Istikhārah, one learns to take directly from the treasures of our Creator, the Being in whose hands lies all good and bad, benefit and harm.

## Method

Sayyidunā Jābir *Raḍiyallāhu 'anhu* relates that Rasūlullāh *Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam* would teach us the manner of performing Istikhārah in all matters as he taught us the Surāhs of the Qur'ān. [This

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<sup>1</sup> Abū Usāmah Ayyūb ibn Maulānā Muḥammad: *Istikhārah in the Light of the Sunnah*.

<sup>2</sup> Footnotes of *al-'Alam al-Hayyib*, pg. 334. Verse: Sūrah Āl 'Imrān, 3:159.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb*, vol. 1 pg. 330; *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, vol. 2 pg. 282. Ṣaḥīḥ/Ḥasan.

<sup>4</sup> *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, vol. 2 pg. 19.

highlights the importance attached to this du‘ā. Just as a person is in need of Sūrah for his ṣalāh, he is in need of Istikhārah for all his matters.]

Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam* said, “If anyone of you thinks of doing any task, he should offer a two rak‘āt prayer other than the compulsory ones and say (after the prayer):

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ ، فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ وَتَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَأَقْضِرْهُ لِي وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي ثُمَّ بَارِكْ لِي فِيهِ ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ وَاقْدِرْ لِي الْخَيْرَ حَيْثُ كَانَ ثُمَّ أَرْضِنِي بِهِ

O Allah! I ask guidance from Your knowledge, power from Your might and I ask for Your great blessings. You are capable and I am not. You know and I do not and You know the unseen. O Allah! If You know that this matter is good for my religion and my subsistence and my Hereafter, then You ordain it for me and make it easy for me to get, and then bless me in it. And if You know that this matter is harmful to me in my religion and subsistence and in the Hereafter, then keep it away from me and let me be away from it. And ordain for me whatever is good for me and make me satisfied with it.

Rasūlullāh *ṣallallāhu ‘alayhi wasallam* added that the person should then mention his need.<sup>5</sup>

## Spirituality

Ibn al-Qayyim quotes from Ibn Taymiyyah: Therefore, one who has placed his total trust in Allah before the occurrence of destiny and is pleased after it has occurred has indeed fulfilled the demands of servitude to Allah.<sup>6</sup>

Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī comments, “As you learn from the words of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qayyim that the Du‘ā’ of Istikhārah is a lesson in genuine Tawakkul and an encouragement to attain its most elevated rank, and you also learn that whoever recites this du‘ā’ has indeed exercised Tawakkul i.e. placed his trust in Allah. and he who places his trust in Allah, Allah is sufficient for him.”<sup>7</sup>

## Short Form of Istikhārah

The short form of Istikhārah appears in a weak narration. The Ṣaḥābah *Raḍiyallāhu ‘anhum* practice it, hence its practice is considered authentic.

اللهم خر لي واختر لي

<sup>5</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth: 1166.

<sup>6</sup> *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, vol. 2 pg. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *Fayḍ al-Bārī*, vol. 2 pg. 428.

*O Allah, destine good for me and choose for me.*

### **Few Basic Masā'il of Istikhārah**

- Istikhārah is an important Sunnah which Rasūlullāh *Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam* taught.
- Performing at least two rak'āt of Ṣalāh is Sunnah. One may perform more than two rak'āt as well.
- The Du'ā' of Istikhārah should be recited after the completion of the ṣalāh.
- When reciting the du'ā', the person may either think of the matter or mention the matter.
- It is not necessary to perform ṣalāh, however. One may simply recite the Du'ā' of Istikhārah.
- Istikhārah may be performed and the du'ā' may be recited at any time. It may be recited after any farḍ ṣalāh as well.
- It is not Sunnah to perform Istikhārah before one goes to bed.
- Istikhārah may be performed as many times as one wishes. It is preferred to perform Istikhārah thrice since Rasūlullāh *Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wasallam* would generally repeat his du'ā' thrice.
- Dreams have no connection with Istikhārah and are not mentioned in the ḥadīth of Istikhārah.
- It is not necessary for the heart to have any strong inclination.
- The essence of Istikhārah is Tafwīḍ (Submitting the matter to Allah) and Tawakkul (Trusting in Allah).
- Istikhārah creates satisfaction with Allah's decree.
- Mashwarah is also Sunnah.