In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Salatul-Istikhara

"Istikhara" means to seek goodness from Allah (Exalted is He), meaning when one intends to do an important task they do Salatul-Istikhara (Prayer for success) before the task. Allah alone knows what is best for us, and there may be good in what we perceive as bad, and bad in what we perceive as good.

If you are ambivalent or unsure about a decision you have to make, then perform the specific prayer for guidance (Salatul-Istikhara) that you can do to ask for Allah’s help in making your decision. Should you marry this certain person? Should you take this job offer or that one? Allah knows what is best for you, and if you are not sure about a choice that you have, seek His guidance.

Salatul-Istikhara is a powerful tool that Allah has given us to ask His guidance in all matters. We should not hesitate to pray istikhara before making any choice (Halal (permissible actions) in our lives, big or small.

The istikhara prayer is very simple: one prays two rakat salaat any time that is not disliked (check below Note:), after which one recites the supplication of istikhara.

According to Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 21, Number 263: Narrated Jabir bin ‘Abdullah: The Prophet salallahu alaihi wasallam used to teach us the way of doing istikhara (istikhara means to ask Allah to guide one to the right sort of action concerning any job or a deed), in all matters as he taught us the Suras of the Qur’an. He said, “If anyone of you thinks of doing any job he should offer a two Rakat prayer other than the compulsory ones and say (after the prayer):

اللّهُمَّ إِنِّى أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بَقُدْرَتِكَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلاَ أَقْدِرُ وَتَعْلَمُ وَلاَ أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلاَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ اللّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هذَا الْأَمْرُ خَيْرٌ لِّي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أَمْرِي فَاقْدُرْهُ لى وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَبَارِكْ
'Allahumma inni astakhiruka bi’ilmika, Wa astaqdiruka bi-qudratika, Wa as’alaka min fadlika al-'azlm Fa-innaka taqdiru Wala aqdiru, Wa ta’lamu Wala a’lamu, Wa anta’ allamu l-ghuyub. Allahumma, in kunta ta’lam anna hadha-l-amra Khairun li fi dini wa ma’ashi wa’aqibati amri (or ‘ajili amri wa’ajilihi) Faqdirhu li wa yas-sirhu li thumma barik li Fihi, Wa in kunta ta’lamu anna hadha-lamra shar-run li fi dini wa ma’ashi wa’aqibati amri (or fi’ajili amri wa ajilihi) Fasrifhu anni was-rifni anhu. Waqdir li al-khaira haithu kana Thumma ardini bihi.'

**TRANSLATION:** "O Allah! I ask guidance from Your knowledge, and 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 job is good for my religion and my subsistence and in my Hereafter--(or said: If it is better for my present and later needs)--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 job is harmful to me in my religion and subsistence and in the Hereafter--(or said: If it is worse for my present and later needs)--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." The Prophet added that then the person should name (mention) his need.

It’s very important to do this prayer with sincerity, knowing in our hearts that only Allah can give us the guidance we seek, and resolved to follow the guidance He gives us, even if it clashes with our own desires.

We should not be impatient after our dua (supplication). We do not put Allah on a timetable and we should not expect some sort of miracle, or a dream full of signs and symbols. These things are not necessary. A decision may be arrived upon using one's intellect/knowledge of Islam and what your heart contents. We simply say our prayers and be patient and trust that Allah has heard us and will answer us in the way that is best.
How many times istikhara do we need to do?

It depends. Sometimes it takes only once to get the answer and sometimes it takes longer. If unclear, it is recommended to repeat the istikhara prayer and supplication seven (7) times. Whatever intention grows stronger in your heart regarding your targeted work/choice follow it after seven days of istikhara. If you have received an answer as explained in the section above, stop doing istikhara. You do not have to continue to do istikhara for 7 days.

Unfortunately, contrary to the instructions of the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him), Muslims today depend entirely on the prayer to make their decisions for them. That is, they make the prayer and supplication prior to making any decision, and rely on dreams to provide the answers for them. It is even common for people to ask others to make istikhara on their behalf. The prayer is often repeated, prior to sleeping, for a set number of days and dream books are consulted to interpret the symbols in their dreams. All of this has no basis in the methodology taught by the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him). However this is not to say that a good dream may not be acted upon as confirmation of a decision, about which istikhara was made.

Great Benefits

- Sleep with ablution.
- Recite salutations (durood/salawat) on the Prophet Allah’s Grace and Peace be upon him. Allah (subhana wata’ala) orders us to say salawat for the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him):

  “Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O you who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation”.
  [Qur’an Al-Ahzab 33:56]

What is understood from above verse is that after each salawat and salam, both our Lord and the angels become pleased.
Note: The prohibited times are: From the beginning of sunrise until 15-20 minutes later. When the sun is at its height (Zenith or Meridian). From the beginning of sunset until it is fully set.

Allah knows best, He is the All-Seeing, All-Hearing, the best Planner. May He guide us and ease all our difficulties. Ameen.