



## **Istikhara-Seeking Divine Guidance**

We have been asked to rely on Allah<sup>azwj</sup> and His Divine messengers<sup>asws</sup> to have 'Tawakal' and keep on praying for what have been made permissible and just for us. However, sometimes, we have to take certain decisions, which may have good or bad outcome and may have significant impact on our lives at later stages. In addition, one would also like to have Divine blessings for his/her action(s), no matter how important or unimportant these are. For these reasons, we have been advised by Masomeen<sup>asws</sup> to first carefully analyse the situation and then have consultation with wise and trustworthy brothers-in-faith and preferably seek Divine guidance through supplications and Istikhara.

It is narrated from Amir-ul-Momineen<sup>asws</sup> that whoever does not seek advice from others and acts on his own judgement, frequently risks being caught in turmoil. Amir-ul-Momineen<sup>asws</sup> also warned and admonished those who would not give a good piece of advice to fellow Muslims even though they are aware of the facts related to the asked issues.<sup>1</sup>

### **To Whom One Should Consult?**

It is narrated from Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> that sometimes there is more harm in consultation than the benefits if certain rules regarding consultation principles are not followed, the person one should consult may belong to one of the followings: (1) be a wise person; (2) be impartial and righteous and (3) be a brother-in-faith and a trustworthy friend and finally give him all the information, as much as you know, so that he may review and assess all aspects (before advising you) and then do not disclose his advice to others. The benefits of acting on these rules would be that if he is a wise person then you will benefit from his knowledge and expertise, if he is impartial and righteous then he will justify the effort and thinking required in finding you a good solution, if he is your brother-in-faith and sincere friend then he will not reveal your secrets to others.

### **To Whom One Should not Consult!**

It is narrated from Rasool Allah<sup>saww</sup> do not consult with a spineless and timid person as he will make your easy escape difficult, from the calamities in front of you, misers and stingy would stop you from doing any good and reaching

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<sup>1</sup> Tahzib-ul-Islam, Allama Majlisi, U, pp.464

your goals and objectives and do not consult with greedy and avaricious<sup>2</sup> as they will recommend and praise the worst possible options.<sup>3</sup>

Once we pass these stages and come to a stage when we have to finalise our course of action(s) then it is recommended by Masomeen<sup>asws</sup> to seek Divine guidance, e.g., whether to perform an act or rather wait for another time? This final consultation is called Istikhara and may only be seeking for those things, which are under one's control to act/adapt or decline. Similarly, Istikhara may be performed on behalf of someone else, if one makes such a request.

## The Meanings and Blessings of Istikhara

The meanings of Istikhara are: to seek Divine guidance, to seek the best from Allah<sup>azwj</sup> in one's affairs. As recommended by Masomeen<sup>asws</sup> in several traditions, e.g.,

### (1)

عن أبي عبد الله (ع) قال: قال الله عزوجل: من شقاء عبدي أن يعمل الاعمال فلا يستخيرني

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> that Allah<sup>azwj</sup>, the most Glorious and the most High said: "One of the reasons for the misfortune of My servant is that he performs an action without seeking the best from Me."<sup>4</sup>

### (2)

(1) اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ، فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ، وَاقْضَ لِي بِالْخَيْرَةِ (2) وَ أَلْهِمْنَا مَعْرِفَةَ الْبِخْتِيَارِ، وَ اجْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ذُرِيَةً إِلَى الرِّضَا بِمَا قَضَيْتَ لَنَا وَ التَّسْلِيمِ لِمَا حَكَمْتَ فَأَرْحَ عَنَّا رَبِّبَ الْبَارْتِيَابِ، وَ أَيْدِنَا بِيَقِينِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ. (3) وَ لَا تَسْمُنَا عَجْزَ الْمَعْرِفَةِ عَمَّا تَخَيَّرْتَ فَتُعْطِ قَدْرَكَ، وَ تَكْرَهُ مَوْضِعَ رِضَاكَ، وَ تَجُنَّحْ إِلَى الْبِخْتِيَارِ هِيَ أَبْعَدُ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْعَاقِبَةِ، وَ أَقْرَبُ إِلَى ضِدِّ الْعَاقِبَةِ (4) حَبِّبْ إِلَيْنَا مَا تَكْرَهُ مِنْ قَضَائِكَ، وَ سَهِّلْ عَلَيْنَا مَا نَسْتَنْصِبُ مِنْ حُكْمِكَ (5) وَ أَلْهِمْنَا الْإِتْقَانَ لِمَا أَوْرَدْتَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ مَشِيئَتِكَ حَتَّى لَا نُحِبَّ تَأْخِيرَ مَا عَجَلْتَ، وَ لَا تَعْجِلَ مَا أَخَّرْتَ، وَ لَا تَكْرَهُ مَا أَحْبَبْتَ، وَ لَا تَتَخَيَّرَ مَا كَرِهْتَ. (6) وَ اخْتِمْ لَنَا بِالْأَيْ هِيَ أَحْمَدُ عَاقِبَةٍ، وَ أَكْرَمُ مَصِيرًا، إِنَّكَ تُفِيدُ الْكَرِيمَةَ، وَ تُعْطِي الْجَسِيمَةَ، وَ تَفْعَلُ مَا تُرِيدُ، وَ أَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ .

Imam Zain-ul-Abideen<sup>asws</sup> says in Sahifa-e-Kamila"O' Allah<sup>azwj</sup>, I beg from You<sup>azwj</sup> for the best in Your knowledge, may blessings be upon Muhammad<sup>saww</sup> and his pure progeny<sup>asws</sup> and command me that You<sup>azwj</sup> see the best! Inspire me with knowledge so that I could choose the most appropriate and enable me to act on what you have destined and judged for me and make me content with its outcome!

Inspire us to yield to that which You<sup>azwj</sup> will Bring upon us by Your<sup>azwj</sup> Will, unless we love the delay of what You<sup>azwj</sup> have not hastened and the hastening of what You<sup>azwj</sup> have delayed, and dislike what You<sup>azwj</sup> Love the most, and choose which You<sup>azwj</sup> dislike the most!

<sup>2</sup> who would do anything for money

<sup>3</sup> Tahzib-ul-Islam, Allama Majlasi, U, pp.465

<sup>4</sup> Al Mahasen, vol. 2, pp. 598

Seal us with that which is the most praised in outcome and most generous in issue! Surely You Give generous gain, Bestow the Immense, do what you Will and You have the Power over everything.<sup>5</sup>

(3)

وقال صلى الله عليه وآله: من سعادة ابن آدم استخارة الله ورضاه بما قضى الله. ومن شقوة ابن آدم تركه استخارة الله وسخطه بما قضى الله

The Prophet of Allah<sup>saww</sup> said: `One of the blessings of Allah<sup>azwj</sup> extended to the children of Adam is to seek the best advice from Allah<sup>azwj</sup> and be pleased with what Allah<sup>azwj</sup> has decided for him. One of the misfortunes of the children of Adam is not to consult Allah<sup>azwj</sup> for what is best for him and to remain unsatisfied with what Allah has decided for him.<sup>6</sup>

(4)

جعفر بن محمد، عن أبيه عليه السلام قال: كنا نتعلم الاستخارة كما نتعلم السورة من كتاب الله عز وجل

It is narrated from Imam Jafar bin Mohammed<sup>asws</sup> that Imam<sup>asws</sup> said: "We (the Ahl al-Bait) teach the method of Istikhara just as we teach the Surahs of the Book of Allah, the Glorious and the most High.<sup>7</sup> "

(5)

قلت لابي عبد الله عليه السلام: بلغني أنك قلت: ما استخار الله عبد في أمره مائة مرة إلا قذفه بخير الأمرين

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> said: 'There is no believing slave (of Allah<sup>azwj</sup>) who would ask the best from Allah<sup>azwj</sup> one time in his affair, except that He<sup>azwj</sup> would provide means to select the best between the two ways.<sup>8</sup>

(6)

سمعت أبا عبد الله (عليه السلام) يقول: " ما استخار الله عزوجل عبد مؤمن إلا خار له، وإن وقع في ما يكره

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> said: "There is no believing slave (of Allah<sup>azwj</sup>) that asks Allah -the Glorious and High -for goodness except that Allah prepares the best for him even if he would not like it.<sup>9</sup> "

### For What Matters One May Take Istikhara?

Istikhara may be taken on anything, which one has under his jurisdiction, excluding those matters, which are related to what would happen in the future, or how, and what someone else would react/do. Seeking advice of fortune-tellers, palm-readers or any other 'Amal' apart from supplications as per

<sup>5</sup> al-Sahifah al-Kamilah of Imam Ali<sup>asws</sup> ibn al-Hussain<sup>asws</sup> 156 : ص (ع) الصحيفة السجادية

<sup>6</sup> Tofatul Aqool, pp. 55

<sup>7</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol.88, pp. 224.

<sup>8</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol.88, pp. 257.

<sup>9</sup> Fatah-al-Aiyab, pp. 149

traditions of Masomeen<sup>asws</sup>, are certainly forbidden. One would also not take Istikhara on certain matters which, although are permissible and belong to present but for some reasons outside one's powers, e.g., if one has no money and there is a request for a loan from a fellow brother then he has no option but to decline the loan request. Similarly matters related to compulsory/permissible (Wajib/halal) non-permissible (Haram) are also outside the scope of Istikhara. Those matters which are within one's means and are permissible under Islamic law are therefore, the ones for which Istikhara is Mustahib, regardless of their value/importance, e.g., issues from buying or selling a house/car to going for a hair cut or buying a pair of shoes. As per the traditions of Masomeen<sup>asws</sup>:

### (1)

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام أنه كان إذا أراد شئ من العبد والدابة أو الحاجة الخفيفة أو الشئ اليسير، استخار الله عز وجل فيه سبع مرات، فإن كان أمرا جسيما استخار الله فيه مائة مرة

Imam Abi Abdullah<sup>asws</sup> would seek guidance from Allah<sup>azwj</sup> whenever Imam<sup>asws</sup> has an intention of buying or selling something, from slaves or animals or the less valuable items or less effort requiring tasks. And would make supplications to Allah<sup>asws</sup> (before taking Istikhara) seven or one hundred times, depending on the seriousness of an issue.<sup>10</sup>

### (2)

قال أبو عبد الله عليه السلام: ما استخار الله عبد سبعين مرة بهذه الاستخارة إلا رماه الله بالخير يقول: يا أبصر الناظرين ويا أسمع السامعين ويا أسرع الحاسبين ويا أرحم الراحمين صل على محمد وعلى أهل بيته وخر لي في كذا وكذا،

Abu Abdullah<sup>asws</sup> said: When, among the slaves of Allah<sup>azwj</sup> sought guidance, Allah<sup>asws</sup> sends good to him. So keep on praying for a better solution, even if it exceeds seventy times while sending Salawat on Mohammed<sup>saww</sup> and Aly Mohammed<sup>asws</sup>.<sup>11</sup>

### (3)

عن عثمان بن عيسى، عن عمرو بن شمر، عن جابر، عن أبي جعفر عليه السلام قال: كان علي بن الحسين عليه السلام إذا هم بأمر حج أو عمرة أو بيع أو شراء أو عتق تطهر ثم صلى ركعتين للاستخارة، فقرأ فيها سورة الحشر، والرحمن والمعوذتين، وقل هو الله أحد، ثم قال " اللهم إن كان كذا وكذا خيرا لي في ديني وخيرا لي في دنياي وأخرتي، وعاجل أمري وأجله، فيسره لي، رب اعزم على رشدي وإن كرهت ذلك وأبته نفسي

It is narrated from Ali bin Ibrahim, who from his father, who from Usman bin Isa who from Ummr bin Shmr who heard from Abi Jafar<sup>asws</sup> that whenever Imam Ali Bin Al Hussain<sup>asws</sup> wanted to go for pilgrimage or Umrah or intended to sell or purchase or free a slave, Imam<sup>asws</sup> would seek Divine guidance by performing Wazu/Ablution, offering two-Rakat salat and reciting the following

<sup>10</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar-Vol-88.Page-280

<sup>11</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar Vol-88.Page-282.

sura's Al-Hashar, Al-Rahman, Al-Muazateen, and Al-Tawheed. Then would recite the following Dua:-<sup>12</sup>

اللَّهُمَّ وَإِنْ كَانَ كَذَا وَكَذَا شَرًّا لِي فِي دِينِي وَدُنْيَايَ وَآخِرَتِي وَعَاجِلِ أَمْرِي وَآجِلِهِ فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي رَبِّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاعْزِمْ لِي عَلَى رُسُلِي وَإِنْ كَرِهْتَ ذَلِكَ أَوْ أَبْتَهُ نَفْسِي

## How to Perform Istikhara?

There are several ways of taking out Istikhara, but for the brevity of the article we have only included one method, among several described by the Masomeen<sup>asws</sup>. Additional traditions from Masomeen<sup>asws</sup> are included in Appendix I and Istikhara by Quran is given in Appendix II. Here, we present a tradition referred to Imam-e-Zaman<sup>ajfj</sup>

وَفِيهِ، سَمِعْتُ وَالِدِي قُدَّسَ سِرُّهُ يَرُوي عَنْ شَيْخِهِ الْبَهَائِيِّ أَنَّهُ كَانَ يَقُولُ سَمِعْنَا مُذَاكِرَةَ عَنْ مَشَائِخِنَا عَنْ الْقَائِمِ عَجَّلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَرَجَهُ فِي الْإِسْتِخَارَةِ بِالسُّبْحَةِ أَنَّهُ يَأْخُذُهَا وَيُصَلِّي عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ ص ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضُ عَلَى السُّبْحَةِ وَيَعُدُّ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَإِنْ بَقِيََتْ وَاحِدَةً فَهُوَ أَفْعَلُ وَإِنْ بَقِيََتْ اثْنَتَانِ فَهُوَ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ

It has been narrated from al-Qa'im<sup>ajfj</sup> on taking out Istikhara by 'Tasbih' Beads: "The Tasbih should be taken<sup>13</sup>, and blessings should be sent on Muhammad and his pure progeny<sup>asws</sup> three times, and then pick a spot on the beads (with your right hand) and count beads two by two (toward the imam). If at the end only one bead remains, then you should take it positive; and if two beads remain (or none when you approach Imam), then you should refrain from performing it.<sup>14</sup>

## The Best Way to Perform Istikhara?

10122 وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْكَلْبِيِّ فِيمَا صَنَّفَهُ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَسَائِلِ الْأَئِمَّةِ ع فِيمَا يَخْتَصُّ بِمَوْلَانَا الْجَوَادِ ع فَقَالَ وَ مِنْ كِتَابِ لَهُ إِلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَسْبَاطٍ فَهَمَّتْ مَا ذَكَرْتَ مِنْ أَمْرِ ضَيْعَتِكَ وَ ذَكَرَ مِثْلَهُ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ زَادَ وَ لَتَكُنَّ الْإِسْتِخَارَةُ بَعْدَ صَلَاتِكَ رُكْعَتَيْنِ

It is narrated from Imam al-Jawad<sup>asws</sup>: "It is best that you seek the best (from Allah<sup>asws</sup>) after a two rakat Salat.<sup>15</sup> In another tradition, it is also recommended; perform Ghusal (bath) prior to taking out Istikhara.<sup>16</sup>

## The One Who Ignores the Istikhara or its Result!

قلت لابي عبد الله (ع): فمن أبغض الخلق إلى الله؟ - قال(ع): من يتهم الله، قلت: وأحد يتهم الله؟ - قال(ع): نعم، من استخار الله فجاءته الخيرة بما يكره فسخط فذلك يتهم الله

Once Imam al-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> was asked: "Who is the worst creation in the eyes of Allah?" The Imam<sup>asws</sup> replied, "The one who stages an accusation against

<sup>12</sup> 470 3 الكافي، Al-Kafi, Vol, 3, H, 2, also Bihar-ul-Anwar Vol-88.Page-263 باب صلاة الاستخارة ..... ص : 47

<sup>13</sup> Take it in the left hand, holding from connecting bead, also called imam.

<sup>14</sup> 265 6 مستدرک الوسائل Bihar al-Anwar, vol 88, pp.250, h.4 -7 باب استحباب الاستخارة بالدعاء و

<sup>15</sup> Fath al-Abwab, Page 143 / Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, Volume 8, Pp 77.

<sup>16</sup> 77 8 وسائل الشيعة Al-Qatara, vol.2. pp. 110 -5 باب استحباب الدعاء بطلب الخيرة و

Allah<sup>azwj</sup>. The person asked again, "Is it possible for a person to come up with an accusation against Allah<sup>azwj</sup>?" Imam<sup>asws</sup>, replied, "Yes. The one who asks Allah<sup>azwj</sup> for the best and when (the best) is given to him but he does not like what is given to him, and he becomes upset. Thus, this is the one who has staged an accusation against Allah<sup>azwj</sup>".<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Al-Mahason, vol 2, pp. 598

## APPENDIX I

### Traditions of Masomeen<sup>asws</sup> on Istikhara

(1)

النبي صلى الله عليه وآله : يا علي ما حار من استخار، ولا ندم من استشار

The Prophet of Islam<sup>saww</sup> said, "O' 'Ali<sup>asws</sup>! Whosoever asks the best (from Allah), will never be confused, and whosoever asks (others) for advice will never be regretful."<sup>18</sup>

(2)

قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام : ما ندم من اسخار

Imam 'Ali<sup>asws</sup> said, "Whosoever asks the best (from Allah<sup>azwj</sup>) will never be regretful."<sup>19</sup>

(3)

3863 (قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام) استخر و لا تتخير فكم من تخير أمرا كان هلاكه فيه

Amir-ul-Momineen<sup>asws</sup> said: (when you intend to do something), seek Allah<sup>azwj</sup>'s guidance and do not decide on your own. How many people have acted upon their self-judgment and have met destruction in it? <sup>20</sup>

(4)

قال أبو عبد الله (ع): من دخل في أمر بغير استخارة ثم ابتلى لم يؤجر

Imam al-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> said: "Whosoever enters into an action without asking Allah<sup>azwj</sup> for what is the best and then falls into a difficulty will not receive the reward ( for being going through the difficulties).<sup>21</sup>

(5)

عن أبي عبد الله عليه السلام قال: ما ابالي إذا استخرت الله على أي طرفي وقعت،

Imam al-Sadiq<sup>asws</sup> said: "It does not matter to me, when I seek the best from Allah<sup>azwj</sup>, which way it falls (whether it results in ease for me, or causes me difficulties).<sup>22</sup>"

<sup>18</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 75, pp. 78

<sup>19</sup> Ghurur al-Hikm, pp. 326

<sup>20</sup> Ghurur al-Hikm, pp. 196, 96 : ص : أهمية التوكل و فضيلته ..... 196 غررالحكم

<sup>21</sup> Al-Mahason, vol. 2, pp. 598

<sup>22</sup> Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 88, pp.223

## APPENDIX II

### Iktikhara by Quran-al-Hakeem

رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَتَفَعَّلَ بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَافْرَأْ سُورَةَ الْإِخْلَاصِ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَ  
آلِهِ ثَلَاثًا ثُمَّ قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ تَفَالَّتْ بِكِتَابِكَ وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَأَرِنِي مِنْ كِتَابِكَ مَا هُوَ مَكْتُومٌ مِنْ سِرِّكَ الْمَكْنُونِ فِي غَيْبِكَ ثُمَّ  
افْتَحِ الْجَامِعَ وَخُذِ الْقَالَ مِنَ الْخَطِّ الْأَوَّلِ فِي الْجَانِبِ الْأَوَّلِ

Prophet of Allah<sup>asws</sup> said: "Whenever you want to seek the best from the Book of Allah<sup>azwj</sup>, the most Glorious and Great, recite Surah al-Ikhlās three times send blessings on the Prophet and his family three times, then say:

اللَّهُمَّ تَفَالَّتْ بِكِتَابِكَ وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَأَرِنِي مِنْ كِتَابِكَ مَا هُوَ مَكْتُومٌ مِنْ سِرِّكَ الْمَكْنُونِ فِي غَيْبِكَ

O Allah<sup>azwj</sup>! I am seeking the best from Your Book and I am relying upon You<sup>azwj</sup> so show me from Your<sup>azwj</sup> book that what is written from Your<sup>azwj</sup> secrets and known from Your<sup>azwj</sup> Unseen Knowledge.' Then open the Qur'an and take what is best for you from beginning of the first line on the right side page."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> باب 4- الاستخارة و التفتول بالقرآن 241 88 also Bihar al-Anwar, vol 91, pp. 246.