

786-110-92

Istikhara-Seeking Divine Guidance

We have been asked to rely on Allah^{swt} and His Divine messengers^{sws} 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^{sws} 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-Momaneen^{sws} that whoever does not seek advice from others and acts on his own judgement, frequently risks being caught in turmoil. Mola^{sws} 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.¹

To Whom One Should Consult?

It is narrated from Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq^{sws} that sometimes there is more harm in consultation than the benefits if

¹ Tahzib-ul-Islam, Allama Majlasi, U, pp.464

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; (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^{saww} 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 your goals and objectives and do not consult with greedy and avaricious² as they will recommend and praise the worst possible options.³

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^{sws} 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

² who would do anything for money

³ Tahzib-ul-Islam, Allama Majlisi, U, pp.465

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^{swt} in one's affairs. As recommended by Masomeen^{sws} in several traditions, e.g.,

(1)

عن أبي عبد الله (ع) قال: قال الله عز وجل: من شَاءَ عَبْدِي أَنْ يَعْمَلَ
الْأَعْمَالَ فَلَا يَسْتَخِيرْنِي

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq^{sws} that Allah^{swt}, 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."⁴

(2)

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَحِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ فَصَلِّ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَقْضِ لِي
بِالْخَيْرَةِ وَاللَّهِمَّ مَعْرِفَةَ الْإِخْتِيَارِ وَاجْعَلْ ذَلِكَ إِلَى الرَّضَا بِمَا
قَضَيْتَ لَنَا وَالتَّسْلِيمِ لِمَا حَكَمْتَ.

Imam Zain-ul-Abideen^{sws} says in Sahifa-e-Kamila "O' Allah^{swt}, I beg from You^{swt} for the best in Your knowledge, may blessings be upon Muhammad^{saww} and his pure progeny^{sws} and command me that You^{swt} 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!"⁵

⁴ Al Mahasen, vol. 2, pp. 598

⁵ al-Sahifah al-Kamilah al-Sajjadiyah of al -Imam 'Ali ibn al-Hussain Zain al-`Abideen

(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^{saww} said: `One of the blessings of Allah^{swt} extended to the children of Adam is to seek the best advice from Allah^{swt} and be pleased with what Allah^{swt} has decided for him. One of the misfortunes of the children of Adam is not to consult Allah^{swt} for what is best for him and to remain unsatisfied with what Allah has decided for him.⁶

(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^{sws} that Imam^{sws} 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.⁷ "

(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^{sws} said: 'There is no believing slave (of Allah^{swt}) who would ask the best from Allah^{swt} one time in his affair, except that He^{swt} would provide means to select the best between the two ways.⁸

⁶ Tofatul Aqool, pp. 55

⁷ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol.88, pp. 224.

⁸ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol.88, pp. 257.

(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^{SWS} said: "There is no believing slave (of Allah^{SWT}) that asks Allah -the Glorious and High -for goodness except that Allah prepares the best for him even if he would not like it.⁹ "

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 traditions of Masomeen^{SWS}, 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^{SWS}:

(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^{SWS} would seek guidance from Allah^{SWT} whenever Imam^{SWS} 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^{SWS} (before taking

⁹ Fatah-al-Aiyab, pp. 149

Istikhara) seven or one hundred times, depending on the seriousness of an issue.¹⁰

(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^{SWS} said: When, among the slaves of Allah^{SWT} sought guidance, Allah^{SWS} sends good to him. So keep on praying for a better solution, even if it exceeds seventy times while sending Salawat on Mohammed^{Saww} and Aly Mohammed^{SWS}.¹¹

(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 وآخرتي، 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 Shamr who heard **from Abi Jafar^{SWS}** that whenever Imam Ali Bin Al Hussain^{SWS} wanted to go for pilgrimage or Umrah or intended to sell or purchase or free a slave, Imam^{SWS} would seek Divine guidance by performing Wazu/Ablution, offering two-Rakat salat and reciting the following sura's Al-Hashar, Al-Rahman, Al-Muazateen, and Al-Tawheed. Then would recite the following Dua:-¹²

اللهم إن كان كذا وكذا خيرا لي في ديني وخيرا لي في دنياي وآخرتي، وعاجل أمري وأجله، فيسره لي، رب اعزم على رشدي وإن كرهت ذلك وأبته نفسي

¹⁰ Bihar-ul-Anwar-Vol-88.Page-280

¹¹ Bihar-ul-Anwar Vol-88.Page-282.

¹² Bihar-ul-Anwar Vol-88.Page-263

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^{SWS}. Additional traditions from Masomeen^{SWS} are included in Appendix I and Istikhara by Quran is given in Appendix II. Here, we present a tradition referred to Imam-e-Zaman^{ajfi}

عَنِ الْقَائِمِ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ فِي الْإِسْتِخَارَةِ بِالسَّبْحَةِ
أَنَّهُ يَأْخُذُهَا وَيُصَلِّي عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ صَلَوَاتُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَيْهِمْ
ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضُ عَلَى السَّبْحَةِ وَيَعُدُّ اثْنَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ فَإِنْ بَقِيََتْ
وَاحِدَةً فَهُوَ إِفْعَلٌ فَإِنْ بَقِيََتْ اثْنَتَانِ فَهُوَ لَا تَفْعَلُ.

It has been narrated from al-Qa'im^{ajfi} on taking out Istikhara by 'Tasbih' Beads: "The Tasbih should be taken¹³, and blessings should be sent on Muhammad and his pure progeny^{SWS} 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.¹⁴

The Best Way to Perform Istikhara?

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَوَادِ الْعَلَمِ:
... وَ لَتَكُنْ الْإِسْتِخَارَةُ بَعْدَ صَلَاتِكَ رَكَعَتَيْنِ.

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

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

¹⁴ Bihar al-Anwar, vol 88, pp.250, h.4

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

¹⁶ Al-Qatara, vol.2. pp. 110

The One Who Ignores the Istikhra 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^{SWS} was asked: "Who is the worst creation in the eyes of Allah?" The Imam^{SWS} replied, "The one who stages an accusation against Allah^{SWT}. The person asked again, "Is it possible for a person to come up with an accusation against Allah^{SWT}?" Imam^{SWS}, replied, "Yes. The one who asks Allah^{SWT} 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^{SWT}".¹⁷

¹⁷ Al-Mahason, vol 2, pp. 598

APPENDIX I

Traditions of Masomeen^{SWS} on Istikhara

(1)

النبى صلى الله عليه وآله : يا علي ما حار من استخار، ولا ندم من استشار
The Prophet of Islam^{saww} said, "O 'Ali^{SWS}! Whosoever asks the best (from Allah), will never be confused, and whosoever asks (others) for advice will never be regretful."¹⁸

(2)

قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام : ما ندم من اسخار
Imam 'Ali^{SWS} said, "Whosoever asks the best (from Allah^{SWT}) will never be regretful."¹⁹

(3)

قال أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام استخر ولا تتخير فكم من تخير أمرا كان هلاكه فيه

Imam Ali^{SWS} said: (when you intend to do something), seek Allah^{SWT}'s guidance and do not decide on your own. How many people have acted upon their self-judgment and have met destruction in it? ²⁰

(4)

قال أبو عبد الله (ع): من دخل في أمر بغير استخارة ثم ابتلى لم يوجر
Imam al-Sadiq^{SWS} said: "Whosoever enters into an action without asking Allah^{SWT} for what is the best and then falls into a difficulty will not receive the reward (for being going through the difficulties).²¹

(5)

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

Imam al-Sadiq^{SWS} said: "It does not matter to me, when I seek the best from Allah^{SWT}, which way it falls (whether it results in ease for me, or causes me difficulties).²²"

¹⁸ Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 75, pp. 78

¹⁹ Ghurur al-Hikm, pp. 326

²⁰ Ghurur al-Hikm, pp. 196

²¹ Al-Mahason, vol. 2, pp. 598

²² Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 88, pp.223

APPENDIX II

Iktikhara by Quran-al-Hakeem

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ:
إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَتَفَالَ بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَاقْرَأْ سُورَةَ الْإِخْلَاصِ
ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ ثَلَاثًا ثُمَّ قُلْ: ((اللَّهُمَّ تَفَالَتْ
بِكِتَابِكَ وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَأَرِنِي مِنْ كِتَابِكَ مَا هُوَ مَكْتُومٌ مِنْ
سِرِّكَ الْمَكْنُونِ فِي غَيْبِكَ)) ثُمَّ أَفْتَحِ الْجَامِعَ وَخُذِ الْفُصَالَ مِنْ
الْخَطِّ الْأَوَّلِ مِنَ الْجَانِبِ الْأَوَّلِ.

Prophet of Allah^{SWS} said: "Whenever you want to seek the best from the Book of Allah^{SWT}, the most Glorious and Great, recite Surah al-Ikhlās three times send blessings on the Prophet and his family three times, then say:

((اللَّهُمَّ تَفَالَتْ بِكِتَابِكَ وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَأَرِنِي مِنْ كِتَابِكَ مَا هُوَ
مَكْتُومٌ مِنْ سِرِّكَ الْمَكْنُونِ فِي غَيْبِكَ))

O Allah^{SWT}! I am seeking the best from Your Book and I am relying upon You^{SWT} so show me from Your^{SWT} book that what is written from Your^{SWT} secrets and known from Your^{SWT} 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. ²³

²³ Bihar al-Anwar, vol 91, pp. 246.