

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allāh, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful

ISTIKHĀRA

SEEKING THE BEST FROM ALLĀH (SWT)

SIGNIFICANCE, METHODS AND TYPES
IN LIGHT OF FOURTY ḤADĪTH AND
THE VIEWS OF THE ‘ULAMĀ

Written by Muḥammad Bāqir Ḥāiderī
Translated by Saleem Bhimji

ISTIKHĀRA: SEEKING THE BEST FROM ALLĀH(SWT)

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DEDICATION

The printing of this book could not have been possible without the support of our donors. We request you, the reader, to recite a Sūrah al-Fātiha for the following:

A selection from al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Kāmilah al-Sajjādiyah of al-Imām ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusain Zāin al-‘Ābidīn:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَحِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَقْضِ لِي
بِالْخَيْرَةِ وَأَلْهِمْنَا مَعْرِفَةَ الْإِخْتِيَارِ وَاجْعَلْ ذَلِكَ إِلَى الرِّضَا بِمَا
قَضَيْتَ لَنَا وَالتَّسْلِيمِ لِمَا حَكَمْتَ.

“O’ Allāh, I ask from You the best in Your knowledge, so bless Muḥammad and his household and decree for me the best! Inspire us with knowledge to choose the best and make that a means to being pleased with what You have decreed for us and submitting to what You have decided!”¹

¹ Translation from al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Kāmilah al-Sajjādiyah by William Chittick

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INTRODUCTION

The Istikhāra is an Islāmic tradition which is strongly rooted in the culture of the Shī'a especially those of Iran, India and Pakistan. Unfortunately however, it has been noticed that most people have an incorrect view of the Istikhāra and the usage of it. When an important issue comes up in their lives, without delay and pausing to stop and think and ask others for advice, they will seek guidance from the Unseen One and perform the traditional Istikhāra. The person, without following the specific conditions and etiquette, will, without delay, reach for the Qur'ān or a Tasbih and...

A group of these people, without even thinking about the outcome of the Istikhāra, will, if they understand the result as being in favor of what they really want to do and what they think is their best interest will act upon it. If it comes out 'negative', they will still act upon it to try to get what they desire.

Yet another group of people, who think that the outcome of the Istikhāra is like the Qur'ān meaning that it is a revelation from Allāh ﷻ take the outcome of it as being obligatory to accept and place their lives and destiny in the result of the Istikhāra.

Both of these groups have definitely not understood the true meaning of the Istikhāra and the proper usage of it, since not paying attention to the first step, that is using one's reason and intellect and then resorting to asking others for advice plays a very important role and has a great effect on the actual outcome of the Istikhāra.

The first group of people, who due to confusion in their own minds in regards to the Istikhāra and performing it without delay, have unwittingly, fallen into a great sin of weakening the Glorious Qur'ān,

and of disrespecting the Noble Scripture. They have chosen their own destiny which is controlled by their own lusts and what is in their ‘best interests’ and even some, without performing the Istikhāra, fall victim to this.

The sins of the second group of people are no less than those of the first group; since without any kind of proof – either from common sense or from the religion, have made it incumbent on themselves to follow the Istikhāra, whose original purpose is to remove doubt and make one’s heart at ease.

If a person is able to reach to this state by better methods such as thinking and asking others for advice, then it is not necessary for him to seek refuge with the Istikhāra; leave aside what would happen to the one who acted upon the outcome of the Istikhāra which has been performed out of confusion and ignorance and by not following the prescribed conditions and prerequisites.

The result of having such an outlook in regards to the Istikhāra is that the person does not use his brain in day to day life and ends up unsuccessful in the twists and turns that life takes him through. Because of this, he loses the real rewards of this world that come from using one’s intelligence and seeking advice from others.

Various types of Istikhāra and the proper method of use

1. Istikhāra by Supplication: The actual meaning of ‘Istikhāra’ is “asking what is best and proper from Allāh, the Merciful” which in itself is a form of supplication. Reliance (upon Allāh ﷻ), leaving all of one’s affairs (to Allāh ﷻ) and having a good or favorable opinion of Allāh ﷻ are the requirements before one performs any supplication. This means that in all of one’s affairs, the person supplicates to Allāh

ﷻ and sincerely, asks Him to make his path easy and to have a good outcome.

The Istikhāra by supplication in all instances takes precedence. It has been recommended that before one performs even the smallest act, he start off by supplicating to Allāh ﷻ. In the aḥādīth, it has been emphasized that this type of Istikhāra should be performed before every action, and is one of the reasons for the success of a person, since in reality, the Istikhāra by supplication includes:

1. *Praising and Glorifying Allāh ﷻ* coupled with modesty and humility towards Him; and asking one's needs and requests from the One who is completely needless. Having good thoughts about Allāh ﷻ and that He only prefers and accepts that which is good for His servants. However, the most important thing is that one will have peace of mind and a sound heart when performing any action.

2. *Istikhāra by Seeking Advice from Others:* When a person needs to find what is truly the best for him, he asks advice from the believers who are capable of providing this advice to him. However, this must be performed after supplicating and asking Allāh ﷻ for the best and asking Him to guide him where prosperity lies. He ﷻ too only wishes what is truly the best and only He knows what is good and bad and is able to have His answer come from the mouth of His servants.

During one's lifetime, every knowledgeable person, especially during times when he needs to make a very important decision regarding his life, should not simply rely on his limited and restricted knowledge and intellect. In addition to his own brain, he is also in need of asking others for advice and see what others have to say since according to Imām 'Alī ؑ, it is incumbent upon a person of intellect to develop and mature

in his own intellect by way of other intelligent people and from the deep knowledge and insight of others.

He, peace be upon him, has said:

حَقُّ عَلَى الْعَاقِلِ أَنْ يَضِيفَ إِلَى رَأْيِهِ رَأْيَ الْعُقَلَاءِ وَيَضُمَّ إِلَى عِلْمِهِ
عُلُومَ الْحُكَمَاءِ.

“It is incumbent on the person of intellect that he humble himself to the views and intelligence of the intellectuals and that he combine his knowledge with the knowledge of the wise people.”²

Seeking advice from the believers who have the ability to offer advice is one of the best ways to seek help and to add insight to one’s thoughts. Before one proceeds with this form of seeking the best, he should perform the supplications and ask Allāh ﷻ for the best and then seek advice from others so that these supplications will give a better outcome to asking others for advice. It is through the supplications and the specific favours of Allāh ﷻ that the advice is given from others and guides one to what is truly the best for him.

Next Stage: If a person makes the intention to perform a certain task, and even after supplicating and asking the best (from Allāh ﷻ), and using his own intelligence, and through thought, research and asking others for advice is still not able to reach to a conclusion and still entertains doubt and uncertainty in his heart, then the best thing to do is to once again return to Allāh ﷻ - the real transform of hearts and ask for ‘content of the heart’ and for help to remove all doubts and confusion. This can be accomplished by a variety of methods of

² Ghurur al-Ḥikm, 4920

Istikhāra including the ‘*spiritual Istikhāra*’, or by use of the *Qur’ān*, *Tasbīh* or by ‘*papers*’.

3. *The ‘Spiritual’ Istikhāra*: This type of Istikhāra is also a type of mystical relationship with Allāh ﷻ. It is performed in this way that after asking others for advice, and after one’s intellect has not produced any results, one performs the supplication to Allāh ﷻ for seeking the best. While in the presence of His Creator who is free from all need and want, asks one’s needs and what is distressing him and asks Him to guide to what is truly the best.

At this time, the person will look deep in his heart, and through soul searching, would see which path to follow is stronger in his soul. This will be the answer to his Istikhāra, and with certainty and satisfaction, would go ahead with one’s plans.

4. *The Istikhāra by Qur’ān*: If after a person has performed the supplication for seeking the best, and after thinking and asking others for advice still does not have peace of mind, then one is permitted to refer to the Qur’ān in order to remove the doubts and through this method, seek the best.³

5. *The Istikhāra by Tasbīh*: If after one has supplicated to Allāh ﷻ and after exhausted his thinking and asking of hers for advice, one is still in a state of confusion, then this method is used. The procedure for this Istikhāra with the Tasbīh has been described in ḥadīth number 34 in this book.

6. *The Istikhāra by ‘Papers’*: This is the final type of Istikhāra mentioned in this book that is performed by using six pieces of paper and as commonly known as *Dhāt al-Riqā’*. Even though this form of

³ Refer to Ḥadīth 30 to 33 for this method.

Istikhāra is hardly known or practiced among the common people, it has a special place amongst a select group of ‘Ulamā.⁴

⁴ See Ḥadith number 35 for this method.

Section One

The Necessity of Performing an Istikhāra for all Affairs

﴿ 1 ﴾

Istikhāra: Success for a Muslim

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ:
مِنْ سَعَادَةِ ابْنِ آدَمَ أَسْتِخَارَتُهُ اللَّهَ وَرِضَاهُ بِمَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَ
مِنْ شَقْوَةِ ابْنِ آدَمَ تَرْكُهُ أَسْتِخَارَةَ اللَّهَ وَ سَخَطُهُ بِمَا قَضَى
اللَّهُ.

The Prophet of Allāh ﷺ said: “Among the felicities of the children of Ādam is that he asks the best from Allāh and His pleasure in that which Allāh has decreed for him. And among the misfortunes of the children of Ādam is abandoning the asking of what is best from Allāh and not being pleased with what Allāh has decreed.”⁵

⁵ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 77, Page 159, Ḥadīth 153

The actual meaning of the word *Istikhāra* is to seek the best from Allāh ﷻ in one's affairs, which is not only commendable, but is also highly recommended (*mustaḥab*) in Islām. This type of Istikhāra which has been continuously mentioned in the aḥādīth is in actuality, one form or type of supplication (*Duā'*) which Allāh ﷻ Himself has given great importance to in the Holy Book:

﴿قُلْ مَا يَعْزُبُكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَائِكُمْ...﴾

“Say: My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer (supplication)...” (*al-Qur'ān* 25:77)

In this, the first ḥadīth, before starting any job or action, a supplication, which is a form of Istikhāra has been recommended to be performed. We have been told that this is one of the roads that lead to a person's happiness.

هر گنج سعادت که خدا داد به حافظ

Whatever treasures of happiness that God gave to Ḥāfīz

از یمن دعای شب و ورد سحری بود

Was from the way of the night supplication and prayers in the morning.

(*Ḥāfīz*)

﴿ 2 ﴾

Istikhāra: A Recommendation from the Ahl al-Baīt

الإمام عَلِيُّ الْعَلِيِّ فِي وَصِيَّتِهِ إِلَى ابْنِهِ الْعَلِيِّ:
... وَأَكْثَرَ الْإِسْتِخَارَةِ،
إِذَا أَمْضَيْتَ فَاسْتَجِرْ.

*al-Imām ‘Alī (عليه السلام) in the will to his son recommended that, “... (In all your actions) continuously ask (Allāh) for the best.”*⁶

*He also said, “Any time you have decided to perform an act, then ask (Allāh) for what is best.”*⁷

The method of asking for what is best that has been most often mentioned in the aḥādīth, including the ḥadīth mentioned above and has been emphasized, is that one in which one asks for the best from Allāh ﷻ in the form of a *Duā’* (supplication).

This type of seeking what is best is not associated with the instance in which a person has a doubt or can not make a decision. Rather, from the traditions of the *Ahl al-Baīt* (عليهم السلام), it is clear that before we carry out any action – no matter how small or insignificant it may be - we are recommended and encouraged to seek help, and constantly remember Allāh ﷻ in all of our affairs.⁸

⁶ Nahj al-Balaāgha, Saying 31

⁷ Ghurur al-Ḥikm, Saying 3988

⁸ The various types of Istikhāra by Duā’ have been mentioned in Aḥādīth 16 to 22, which will follow.

﴿ 3 ﴾

Istikhāra: As Taught by the Ahl al-Bāit

الإمام الباقر عليه السلام:
كُنَّا نَتَعَلَّمُ الْإِسْتِخَارَةَ كَمَا نَتَعَلَّمُ السُّورَةَ مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ
جَلَّ.

al-Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام said: “We (the Ahl al-Bāit) teach the method of Istikhāra (asking Allāh for what is best) just as we teach the Sūrahs of the Book of Allāh, the Glorious and the High.”⁹

In reality, the Istikhāra or asking the best from Allāh ﷻ is a type of spiritual link or connection and request of one’s needs from the humble servant to the Needless and Self-Existing Creator.

The supplications and requesting what is best - both before and during all acts, establishes a deep and continuous relationship between the servant of Allāh ﷻ - who is always in need of help, and his needless Master.

This is the type of Istikhāra that has been emphasized by the *A’immah* of the Ahl al-Bāit عليهم السلام and was part of their natural disposition (*fiṭrah*).

The Istikhāra with the Tasbīh beads and the Qur’ān is the final step after one still entertains doubts and uncertainty in his mind and should only be done **after seeking the best from Allāh ﷻ**, thinking, weighing out the pros and cons, and requesting advice from others.

⁹ Wasā’il ash-Shīa, Volume 7, Page 66, Ḥadīth 10101

Section Two

The Outcome of the Istikhāra

﴿ 4 ﴾

Divine Inspiration to the Right Path

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ :
... مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ مُؤْمِنٍ يَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ فِي أَمْرٍ يُرِيدُهُ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً إِلَّا
قَدَفَهُ بِخَيْرِ الْأَمْرَيْنِ.

al-Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "...there is no believing slave (of Allāh) who asks the best from Allāh one time in his affair, except that He makes a means between the two ways."¹⁰

Allāh, the Glorious and the High is the Purest Perfect Being, and as long as there are no obstacles from the servant's side to prevent His mercy from being manifested, then He will not withhold His blessings and grace.

¹⁰ Bihār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 257, Ḥadīth 2

Thus, if a true servant of Allāh ﷻ, with sincerity and a pure heart asks Him for guidance even one time, then without doubt, Allāh ﷻ will guide him towards that which is good and advisable for him.

﴿ 5 ﴾

Help in Choosing the Right Path

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ :
مَا اسْتَخَارَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ إِلَّا خَارَ اللَّهُ لَهُ وَإِنْ وَقَعَ مَا
يُكْرَهُ.

al-Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “There is no believing slave (of Allāh) that asks Allāh - the Glorious and High - for goodness except that Allāh ﷻ prepares the best for him even if he (the person) does not like it.”¹¹

How unfortunate is it for man that sometimes that which is good for him lies in something that he does not like! Therefore, after one asks the best from Allāh ﷻ, he should not anticipate that what he is asking for will automatically be given to him and just as he would like it to be (since that may not be the right thing for him).

¹¹ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 224, Ḥadīth 4

﴿ 6 ﴾

A Way Out of Confusion

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ:
يَا عَلِيُّ! مَا حَارَ مَنْ أَسْتَخَارَ وَلَا نَدِمَ مَنْ أَسْتَشَارَ.

The Prophet of Islām ﷺ said, “O ‘Ali! Whosoever asks the best (from Allāh), will never be confused, and whosoever asks (others) for advice will never be regretful.”¹²

The above ḥadīth was a special piece of advice from the Prophet of Islām ﷺ to Amīr al-Mo’minīn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؑ during one of his travels to Yemen to spread the faith of Islām.

In such a dangerous mission, the most important thing that one could have asked for is a strong heart, confidence, and conviction.

Asking the best from Allāh ﷻ, is the method to attain these spiritual traits and characteristics.

¹² Amālī Shaikh Ṭūsi, Volume 136, Ḥadīth 22 / Wasā’il ash-Shī’a, Volume 80, Page 78, Ḥadīth 10125

﴿ 7 ﴾

Removal of Remorse and Sorrow

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ عَلِيُّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:
... مَا نَدِمَ مَنْ أَسْتَخَارَ.

al-Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام said, “Whosoever asks the best (from Allāh) will never be regretful.”¹³

The greatest outcome of asking for the best from Allāh ﷻ before performing an action and in all matters is to arrive at the stage of having satisfaction of the heart, removal of all doubt and dilemma, and the elimination of all confusion and distress.

¹³ Ghurur al-Ḥikm, 9453

Section Three

Penalty for Not Performing an Istikhāra

﴿ 8 ﴾

Failure in One's Actions

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
يَقُولُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ((مَنْ شَقَاءَ عَبْدِي أَنْ يَعْمَلَ الْأَعْمَالَ وَ لَا
يَسْتَحِيرُ بِي.))

*al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said that Allāh, the Glorious and High has said: "Of the reasons for the misfortune of My servant is that he performs an action but does not seek the best from Me."*¹⁴

The meaning of seeking the best which has been recommended to be done before all tasks as has been mentioned in the above Ḥadīth, which if not

¹⁴ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 222, Ḥadīth 1

performed will lead one to misfortune, is simply asking for the best from Allāh ﷻ.

It is the simple task of saying, '*O' Allāh guide us to whatever you deem is best and whatever your pleasure lies in*' that one can achieve this mental state. This can grant us prosperity in our works.

﴿ 9 ﴾

Ruin and Destruction

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ عَلِيُّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:
إِسْتَحْرَ وَ لَا تَتَّخِذْ فَكَمْ مِنْ تَخِيرٍ أَمْرًا كَانَ هَلَاكُهُ فِيهِ.

al-Imām ‘Alī عليه السلام said: “Seek the best from Allāh and do not decide on your own (when you intend to do anything). How many people have decided on their own in performing a task and their destruction was in that.”¹⁵

The meaning of the above Ḥadīth and Aḥādīth number 8 and 10 do not mean that before one weighs the pros and cons, uses his own intelligence and consults with others, he should immediately open the Qur’ān or take hold of his Tasbīḥ beads and seek what is good for himself and let his future be decided by one of these methods. One who acts in this way has definitely not understood the true meaning of the Istikhāra.

Rather, these aḥādīth - in addition to providing us with valuable supplications, also help us to establish a spiritual link between us and our Creator.

¹⁵ Ghurur al-Ḥikm, Saying 2346

﴿ 10 ﴾

Deprivation of Blessings from Allāh ﷻ

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:
مَنْ دَخَلَ فِي أَمْرٍ بغيرِ اسْتِخَارَةِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ ابْتَلَى لَمْ يُؤْجَرْ.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq ﷺ said: “Whosoever enters into an action without asking Allāh for what is the best and then falls into a difficulty will not receive the reward (as one who had gone thru trials and tribulations).”¹⁶

There are some people who without the least amount of contemplation, investigation and seeking advice from others, resort to “the well-known types of Istikhāra” to decide everything in their lives.

Before they proceed to do anything, without thought and getting recommendations from others, they seek help and resort to the Qur’ān or the Tasbiḥ beads to help them decide the path to choose.

It must be pointed out that this view about the Istikhāra is completely wrong and is diametrically opposed to the clear verses of the Qur’ān and the aḥādīth which clearly mention the need for one to use his own God-given intellect and thinking before proceeding to perform any action.

These kind of people who consider the value of thought and seeking advice from others to be something baseless are actually suffering from a lack of intelligence and in most instances in their daily lives, will be bound to blunder.

¹⁶ al-Maḥasin, Volume 2, Page 432, Ḥādīth 2498 | Biḥār al-Anwār Volume 91, Page 223, Ḥādīth 2

Section Four

The Necessity of Being Pleased With the Outcome of an Istikhāra

﴿ 11 ﴾

The Trust of the Imāms in the Outcome of an Istikhāra

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:
مَا أَبَالِي إِذَا اسْتَخَرْتُ اللَّهَ أَيَّ طَرْفِي وَقَعَتْ.

*al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “It does not matter to me that when I seek the best from Allāh, which way it falls (whether it results in ease for me, or causes me difficulties).”*¹⁷

The true believer has no doubt that Allāh, the Glorious, only wants the very best (for His servants). He knows that Allāh ﷻ is the endless ocean of

¹⁷ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 223, Ḥadīth 3

Mercy and that it is far from His glory that His servant calls upon Him and asks for the best, and He makes him wait.

From another angle, the true believer has a firm belief that Allāh ﷻ has the power to open up one's path to prosperity and ease.

The true believer knows and understands that what is good for him does not always lie in ease and comfort; and sometimes, it is possible that what is truly good for him may be in observing patience and enduring trials and tribulations.

In light of the three points mentioned above, after the true believer supplicates and sincerely asks for the best from Allah ﷻ, he must not despair or become disheartened. Whatever actions he performs afterwards must be discharged with complete satisfaction and conviction of the heart.

﴿ 12 ﴾

One Must Believe that an Istikhāra will Solve the Dilemma

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
مَنْ اسْتَخَارَ اللَّهَ رَاضِيًا بِمَا صَنَعَ اللَّهُ خَارَ اللَّهُ لَهُ حَتْمًا.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “Whosoever asks Allāh for the best and is pleased with what Allāh has decided for him, then without doubt, Allāh will secure the best for him.”¹⁸

According to the above-mentioned ḥadīth, the pleasure of the person will be in that which Allāh ﷻ decides after the person has asked Allāh for what is the best. This is one of the etiquette and conditions before one performs the customary Istikhāra.

Before one asks Allāh ﷻ for the best, it is imperative that attention is paid to the following point:

مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ يَدْعُو اللَّهَ إِلَّا اسْتَجَابَ لَهُ.

“There is no believer that calls upon Allāh except that He answers the call.”¹⁹

That which a person supplicates to Allāh ﷻ for is either granted in this world – sooner or later, or it will be given to him in the next world; or

¹⁸ al-Kāfi, Volume 8, Page 241, Ḥadīth 33 | Maḥāsin, Page 598, Ḥadīth 1 | Wasā’il ash-Shi’a, Volume 8, Page 63, Ḥadīth 10094

¹⁹ ‘Uddatul Dā’ee, Page 34, Ḥadīth 8 | Wasā’il ash-Shi’a, Volume 4, Page 1084, Ḥadīth 9

something bad that was going to happen to him which was impending to occur, will be averted.²⁰

²⁰ ‘Uddatul Dā‘i, Page 24, Ḥadīth 8 | Wasā’il ash-Shi’a, Volume4, Page 1086, Page 1086, Ḥadīth 8

﴿ 13 ﴾

Opening of the Doors of Goodness

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الْأَصْبَاحِيُّ النَّبِيلِيُّ:
مَنْ أَسْتَخَارَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مَرَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَهُوَ رَاضٍ بِمَا صَنَعَ اللَّهُ لَهُ
خَارَ اللَّهُ لَهُ حَتْمًا.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “Whosoever asks Allāh, the Glorious and the High for the best a single time and is content with what Allāh has decided for him, then Allāh will definitely make that which is good for him come about.”²¹

One of the most important etiquette of seeking the best from Allāh ﷻ is that one must have certainty that He will decide the best for His servants and that He has the power to give or withhold whatever is best for His servant.

In short, the servant must have complete satisfaction and peace of heart that after performing the Istikhāra, whatever is truly the best for him is the only thing that Allāh ﷻ will decide.

²¹ Faṭḥ al-Abwāb, Page 257 | Maḥāsin, Page 598, Ḥadīth 1 | Biḥār al-Anwār, Page 91, Ḥadīth 256

Section Five

Danger of not Being Satisfied with the Outcome of an Istikhāra

﴿ 14 ﴾

Leveling Accusations against Allāh ﷻ

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ :
مَنْ اسْتَخَارَ اللَّهَ فِي أَمْرِهِ فَعَمِلَ أَحَدَ الْأَمْرَيْنِ فَعَرِضَ فِي قَلْبِهِ شَيْءٌ
إِنَّهُمْ اللَّهَ فِي قَضَائِهِ .

*al-Imām al-Šādiq عليه السلام said: "Whosoever seeks the best from Allāh in his affair, and acts upon one of the options (either performs or does not perform an action) but has something enter into his heart (unhap piness or doubt regarding to how he acted), has leveled an (unfounded) accusation against Allāh."*²²

²² Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 225

It is possible that not being truly happy with the outcome of the Istikhāra has its roots in one of the following:

1. Doubt whether Allāh ﷻ truly wants the best (for His servants), which in reality is laying an unsupported accusation that Allāh is greedy and does not want good for His servants.
2. Doubt in the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ concerning what is truly good, which in reality is laying the charge that Allāh ﷻ is ignorant and is imperfect.
3. Doubt in the power of Allāh ﷻ in deciding what is truly the best. This action charges Allāh ﷻ with being weak and powerless.
4. Doubt that Allāh ﷻ does not pay attention to His servants and their asking for the best from Him. This action insinuates that there is some defect in the mercy of Allāh ﷻ.

One must have complete certainty in whatever Allāh ﷻ has decided, and be pleased that He would do only what is good for His servants. This is because without a doubt, Allāh ﷻ will guide His servants to that which is good and that in which lies his betterment, however many sins the servant of Allāh ﷻ has on his record.

﴿ 15 ﴾

Being Distanced from the Mercy of Allāh ﷻ

سُئِلَ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ﷺ:
مَنْ أَبْعَضَ الْخَلْقَ إِلَى اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ ﷺ: مَنْ يَتَّهَمُ إِلَيْهِ. قِيلَ وَ
أَحَدٌ مَنْ يَتَّهَمُ اللَّهَ؟ قَالَ ﷺ نَعَمْ. مَنْ اسْتَخَارَ اللَّهَ فَجَاءَتْهُ
الْخَيْرَةُ بِمَا يُكْرَهُ فَسَخَطَ. فَذَلِكَ يَتَّهَمُ اللَّهَ.

al-Imām al-Sādiq ﷺ was once asked: “Who is the worst creation in the eyes of Allāh?” The Imām ﷺ replied, “The one who levels an accusation against Him (Allāh).” The person retorted, “Is it possible for a person to level an accusation against Allāh?” The Imām ﷺ replied, “Yes. The one who asks Allāh for the best and it (the best) is given to him but in the way of something that he does not like, and he becomes upset. Thus, this is the one who has leveled an accusation against Allāh.”²³

²³ Makārim al-Akhlaq | Maḥāsin Barqī, Page 598, Ḥadīth 5 | Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 223, Ḥadīth 2

Section Six

The Various Forms of Istikhāra: Istikhāra by Supplication

﴿ 16 ﴾

The Recitation of the Phrase

'I seek the best from Allāh' and the number of times to recite:

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
((أَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ)) تَقُولُهَا فِي الْأَمْرِ الْعَظِيمِ مِائَةً مَرَّةً وَ مَرَّةً وَ فِي الْأَمْرِ
الذُّوْنِ عَشْرَ مَرَّاتٍ .

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "In the case of an important action, recite:

أَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ

'I seek the best from Allāh' one hundred and one times, and for a lesser important action, recite it ten times."²⁴

²⁴ Fath al-Abwāb, Page 252 | Wasā'il ash-Shi'a, Volume 9, Page 77, Ḥadīth 10124
38

﴿ 17 ﴾

*The Supplication for ‘Seeking the Best’
and the Number of Times to Recite it:*

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
مَا اسْتَحَارَ اللَّهُ عَبْدٌ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً بِهَذِهِ الْإِسْتِخَارَةِ إِلَّا رَمَاهُ اللَّهُ
بِالْخَيْرَةِ يَقُولُ: ((يَا أَبْصَرَ النَّاطِرِينَ وَ يَا أَسْمَعَ السَّمَاعِينَ وَ يَا أَسْرَعَ
الْحَاسِبِينَ وَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ وَ يَا أَحْكَمَ الْحَاكِمِينَ صَلِّ عَلَى
مُحَمَّدٍ وَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَ خَرَلِي فِي الْأَمْرِ الَّذِي أَرَدْتُ.))

al-Imām al-Šādiq عليه السلام said: “No servant asks Allāh for the best seventy times in this method except that Allāh gives him what is best – and he should say:

يَا أَبْصَرَ النَّاطِرِينَ وَ يَا أَسْمَعَ السَّمَاعِينَ وَ يَا أَسْرَعَ الْحَاسِبِينَ وَ يَا
أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ وَ يَا أَحْكَمَ الْحَاكِمِينَ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ
وَ خَرَلِي فِي الْأَمْرِ الَّذِي أَرَدْتُ.

“O’ the best Seer of Seers and O’ the best Hearer of Hearers and O’ the Quickest of Reckoners and O’ the Most Merciful and O’ the Judge of Judges! Send your blessings on Muḥammad and his family and grant me the best in the action which I have intended to perform.”²⁵

²⁵ Man Lā Yaḥḏhur al-Faqīhi, Volume 1, Page 536 | Tahdhib al-Aḥkām, Volume 3, Page 182

﴿ 18 ﴾

The Supplication for Asking for the Best (Istikhāra)

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:
قَالَ قُلِ ((اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ الْخَيْرَ
بِقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَيْهِ لَأَنَّكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ
فَأَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدِ النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَيَّ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ. اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ
الَّذِي أُرِيدُهُ خَيْرًا لِي فِي دِينِي وَدُنْيَايَ وَآخِرَتِي فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَإِنْ
كَانَ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ.))

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said, "Say the following (supplication):

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ الْخَيْرَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَيْهِ
لَأَنَّكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ فَأَسْأَلُكَ أَنْ تُصَلِّيَ
عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدِ النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَيَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ. اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي أُرِيدُهُ خَيْرًا لِي
فِي دِينِي وَدُنْيَايَ وَآخِرَتِي فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَإِنْ كَانَ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ
فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ.

"O' Allāh! I ask you for the best by Your Mercy and by Your power since You (alone) are the Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. So I ask you that you send blessings on

Muḥammad, the Prophet and his family just as you have sent blessings on Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm, since verily You are the Praiseworthy and Glorious. O' Allāh if there is good in this act which I have made the intention to perform for my religion or my worldly affairs and my hereafter, then make the task easy for me and if it is not like this then turn it away from me and let me turn away from it too."²⁶

²⁶ Wasā'il ash-Shi'a, Volume 8, Page 76, Ḥadīth 10119 | Mahāsin Barqī, Page 599, Ḥadīth 9

﴿ 19 ﴾

The Method of Seeking the Best from Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الْبَاقِرُ عليه السلام:
يَقُولُ مَا اسْتَخَارَ اللَّهُ عَبْدٌ قَطُّ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ إِلَّا رُمِيَ بِخَيْرَةٍ الْأَمْرَيْنِ
يَقُولُ: ((اللَّهُمَّ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ إِنَّ كَانَ أَمْرٌ كَذَا وَكَذَا
خَيْرًا لِأَمْرٍ دُنْيَايَ وَآخِرَتِي وَعَاجِلِ أَمْرِي وَآجِلِهِ فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَ
افْتَحْ لِي بَابَهُ وَرَضِّنِي فِيهِ بِقَضَائِكَ.))

al-Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام said: “There is no servant, who seeks the best from Allāh one hundred times by saying the following except that Allāh guides him to one of the two paths²⁷:

اللَّهُمَّ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ إِنَّ كَانَ أَمْرٌ كَذَا وَكَذَا خَيْرًا لِأَمْرٍ
دُنْيَايَ وَآخِرَتِي وَعَاجِلِ أَمْرِي وَآجِلِهِ فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَافْتَحْ لِي بَابَهُ
وَرَضِّنِي فِيهِ بِقَضَائِكَ.

“O’ Allāh the knower of the hidden and apparent. If in this action there is good for the affairs of my world and my hereafter, then make it easy for me and open up the doors of it for me and make my pleasure be in that which You have decreed.”

²⁷ Faḥ al-Abwāb 235, Wasā’il ash-Shi’a Volume 8, Page 77, Ḥadīth 10123

﴿ 20 ﴾

*The method of 'Seeking the Best'
as practiced by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام*

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
 نُعْظِمُ اللَّهَ وَكَمَجِّدُهُ وَتَحْمِيدُهُ وَتُصَلِّيَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ (عَلَيْهِمُ
 السَّلَامُ) ثُمَّ تَقُولُ: ((اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِأَنَّكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ
 وَالشَّهَادَةِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ وَأَنْتَ عَالِمُ الْغُيُوبِ أَسْتَجِيرُ اللَّهَ
 بِرَحْمَتِهِ)) إِنْ كَانَ الْأَمْرُ شَدِيدًا تَخَافُ فِيهِ قُلْتَهُ مِائَةً مَرَّةً وَإِنْ
 كَانَ غَيْرُ ذَلِكَ فَثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "There is no servant of Allāh ﷻ that honor, glorifies and praises Allāh, and sends blessings on the Prophet and his family عليهم السلام and says:

((اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِأَنَّكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 وَأَنْتَ عَالِمُ الْغُيُوبِ أَسْتَجِيرُ اللَّهَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ))

"O' Allāh! Verily I ask you since verily You are the knower of the hidden and the apparent, the Beneficent, the Merciful and You are the knower of all the Unknowns. I seek the best from Allāh by His mercy."

If the matter is something important in which there is some fear or distress, then the above supplication should be read one hundred times and in other than this, it can be read three times."²⁸

²⁸ Faṭḥ al-Abwāb, Page 255 | Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 256

﴿ 21 ﴾

The method of 'Seeking the Best'
from Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far al-Kāzīm عليه السلام

أَتَاهُ (مُوسَى بْنُ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ) فَقَالَ لَهُ:
جَعَلْتُ فِدَاكَ أُرِيدُ وَجْهَ كَذَا وَكَذَا، فَعَلَّمَنِي أَسْتَحَارَةَ إِنْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ
الْوَجْهَ خَيْرًا أَنْ يُسِيرَهُ اللَّهُ لِي وَإِنْ كَانَ شَرًّا صَرَّفَهُ اللَّهُ عَنِّي. فَقَالَ
لَهُ: وَتُحِبُّ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ فِي ذَلِكَ الْوَجْهِ؟ قَالَ الرَّجُلُ: نَعَمْ. قَالَ:
قُلْ ((اللَّهُمَّ قَدِّرْ لِي كَذَا وَكَذَا وَاجْعَلْهُ خَيْرًا لِي. فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ عَلَيَّ
ذَلِكَ)).

A man enter into the presence of him (Mūsā ibn Ja'far عليه السلام) and said to him, "May I be sacrificed for you! I want to perform a certain task. Please teach me the way to ask the best (from Allāh) such that if in that work, there is good for me, that Allāh makes it easy for me, and if there is bad in it for me, then Allāh makes me turn away from it. The Imām عليه السلام said to the man, "Do you want to do that task?" The man replied, "Yes." The Imām replied, "Say the following (so that Allāh makes what is good for you in the performance of that act):²⁹

اللَّهُمَّ قَدِّرْ لِي كَذَا وَكَذَا وَاجْعَلْهُ خَيْرًا لِي. فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ عَلَيَّ ذَلِكَ.

"O' Allah! Decree for me this and this and place goodness in it for me, since verily You are the one who Decrees in this."

²⁹ Qurb al-Isnād, Page 300 | Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 260, Ḥadīth 10

﴿ 22 ﴾

‘Asking for what is Best’ in the Duā’ of the Istikhāra

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
وَلْتَكُنْ إِسْتِخَارَتَكَ فِي عَافِيَةٍ فَإِنَّهُ رَبُّمَا خَيْرٌ لِلرَّجُلِ فِي قَطْعِ يَدِهِ
وَمَوْتِ وَلَدِهِ وَذَهَابِ مَالِهِ.

*al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “...Your seeking the best must be accompanied with requesting (something that is) good, since sometimes it is possible that what is best for a person lies in his hand being cut off, the death of his child, and the loss of his wealth and property.”*³⁰

³⁰ Tahdhib al-Aḥkām, Volume 3, Page 181, Ḥadīth 411 | al-Maḥāsin, Volume 2, Page 599, Ḥadīth 7 | al-Kāfi, Volume 3, Page 472, Ḥadīth 7 | Wasā’il ash-Shi’a, Volume 8, Page 65, Ḥadīth 10098

﴿ 23 ﴾

*The method of 'Seeking the Best'
as done by the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ*

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ:
يَا أَنَسُ! إِذَا هَمَمْتَ بِأَمْرٍ فَاسْتَخِرْ رَبَّكَ فِيهِ سَبْعَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ انْظُرْ
إِلَى أَمْرِ الَّذِي يَسْبِقُ إِلَى قَلْبِكَ فَإِنَّ الْخَيْرَ فِيهِ يَعْنِي إِفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ.

*The Prophet of Islam ﷺ said, "O' Anas! Any time you want to perform a n act (then before you do it), ask Allāh for the best seven times and then see what answer (either to perform it or not to perform that task) comes into your heart. That which is the best for you will be the response, meaning, whatever is in your heart should be acted upon."*³¹

Allāh ﷻ is the changer of hearts and desires, and He has the power to guide His servants and remove all doubts and indecision from their hearts.

³¹ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 265, Ḥadith 19
46

﴿ 24 ﴾

*The method of 'Seeking the Best'
as done by Amīr al-Mo'minīn 'Alī عليه السلام*

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الْبَاقِرُ عليه السلام:

كَانَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عليه السلام يُصَلِّي رَكَعَتَيْنِ وَيَقُولُ فِي دُبْرِهِمَا
(أَسْتَخِيرُكَ اللَّهُ) مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي قَدْ هَمَمْتُ بِأَمْرٍ
قَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ فَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَ دُنْيَايَ وَ آخِرَتِي
فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي. وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي وَ دُنْيَايَ وَ
آخِرَتِي فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي. كَرِهْتَ نَفْسِي ذَلِكَ أَمْ أَحَبْتَ فَإِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ
وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَامُ الْغُيُوبِ. ثُمَّ يَعْزَمُ.

*al-Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام narrated that: "Amīr al-Mo'minīn عليه السلام would pray a
two rak'at Ṣalāt and once finished, would say:*

أَسْتَخِيرُكَ اللَّهُ

"I seek the best from Allāh" one hundred times, and then say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي قَدْ هَمَمْتُ بِأَمْرٍ قَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ فَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي
دِينِي وَ دُنْيَايَ وَ آخِرَتِي فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي. وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ شَرٌّ لِي فِي
دِينِي وَ دُنْيَايَ وَ آخِرَتِي فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي. كَرِهْتَ نَفْسِي ذَلِكَ أَمْ
أَحَبْتَ فَإِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَامُ الْغُيُوبِ. ثُمَّ يَعْزَمُ.

“‘O’ Allāh! I have intended to perform a task which You know. Thus, if you know that in it there is good for me in this world, in my religion and in the hereafter, then make it (that task) easy for me; and if you know that in it there is bad for me in this world, in my religion and in the hereafter, then let me turn away from that task; whether I detest that task or I love it, since You know (better than I) and I do not know and You are the Knower of the Unseen.’ Then act according (to whatever you feel in your heart).”

﴿ 25 ﴾

The Istikhāra from the heart; seeking advice from Allāh ﷻ

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:

إِذَا عَرَضَتْ لِأَحَدِكُمْ حَاجَةٌ فَلْيَسْتَشِرِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ فَإِنْ أَسَارَ عَلَيْهِ اتَّبِعْ
وَإِنْ لَمْ يُشِرْ عَلَيْهِ تَوَقَّفْ. قَالَ قُلْتُ: يَا سَيِّدِي وَكَيْفَ أَعْلَمُ
ذَلِكَ؟ قَالَ تَسْجُدُ عَقِيبَ الْمَكْتُوبَةِ وَتَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ خِرْ لِي مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ
ثُمَّ تَتَوَسَّلُ بِنَا وَتُصَلِّي عَلَيْنَا وَتَسْتَشْفِعُ بِنَا ثُمَّ تَنْظُرُ مَا يُلْهِمُكَ
تَفَعَّلُهُ فَهُوَ الَّذِي أَسَارَ عَلَيْكَ بِهِ.

al-Imām al-Şādiq ؑ: “When any of you want something, you must seek council with Allāh, your Lord (and act according to it). If He guides you to it, then perform the act; and if He does not guide you to it, then do not perform it.” A man questioned, “I said, O’ Master! And how will we know this?” The Imam replied, “Go into Sajdah after your wajib Şalāt, and say the following one hundred times:

اللَّهُمَّ خِرْ لِي

“O’ Allāh, grant me what is best.”

Then, perform Tawassul to us (the Ahl al-Bait) and send blessings upon us and take us as your intercessors. Then look at what is revealed (into your heart) and act according to it, and this is the seeking council with Him (Allāh).³²

³² Amālī Tūsi, Volume 1, Page 281 | Wasā’il ash-Shi’a, Volume 8, Page 74, Ḥadīth 10114

﴿ 26 ﴾

*The method of 'Seeking the Best'
from Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام*

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الْأَصَادِقُ عليه السلام:
... فَصَلِّ رَكَعَتَيْنِ وَاسْتَخِرِ اللَّهَ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ وَ مَرَّةً ثُمَّ أَنْظِرْ أَحْزَمَ
الْأَمْرَيْنِ لَكَ فَافْعَلْهُ فَإِنَّ الْخَيْرَ فِيهِ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

*al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "...recite a two Rak'at Ṣalāt and then ask the best from Allāh one hundred and one times and see which of the two ways (either to perform that act or not perform it) is stronger (in your heart) and act accordingly, since whatever is best for you is in that, Inshā-Allāh."*³³

The only person who will be able to make use of this method of seeking what is the best is the one whose heart has been purified of the various types of whispers of Shaitān and whose heart has not become polluted with sins. Such a heart is one that still has the desire and capability of receiving the heavenly inspiration of Allāh.

³³ al-Kāfi, Volume 3, Page 472 | Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām, Volume 3, Page 181, Ḥadīth 411 | Wasā'il ash-Shi'a Volume 8, Page 65, Ḥadīth 10098

﴿ 27 ﴾

*The method of 'Seeking the Best'
from Imām 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā عليه السلام*

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الرَّضَا عليه السلام:

إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَمْرًا فَصَلِّ رَكَعَتَيْنِ وَاسْتَخِرِ اللَّهَ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ وَمَا عَزَمَ لَكَ فافعل. وَقُلْ فِي دُعَايِكَ: ((لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ. لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْحَلِيمُ الْكَرِيمُ. رَبُّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلِيٍّ حِرِّي فِي أَمْرِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ خَيْرَةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ مَا لَكَ فِيهِ رِضًا وَ لِي فِيهِ صَلَاحٌ فِي خَيْرٍ وَعَافِيَةٍ. يَا ذَا الْمَنِّ وَالطَّوْلِ.))

al-Imām al-Riḍā عليه السلام said: "When you intend to do something, pray a two Rak'at Ṣalāt and seek the best from Allāh one hundred times, then whatever is stronger (in your heart), perform that. In your supplication, recite:

((لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ. لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْحَلِيمُ الْكَرِيمُ. رَبُّ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلِيٍّ حِرِّي فِي أَمْرِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ خَيْرَةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ مَا لَكَ فِيهِ رِضًا وَ لِي فِيهِ صَلَاحٌ فِي خَيْرٍ وَعَافِيَةٍ. يَا ذَا الْمَنِّ وَالطَّوْلِ.))

'There is no god except Allāh, the Highest, the Greatest. There is no god except Allāh, the Patient, the Noble. The Lord of Muḥammad and 'Alī! Grant me the best in my action for this world and for the next world, the best from Yourself, that in which Your pleasure lies in and which is good

for me for the goodness of the next world. O' possessor of Blessings and Mercy!''''³⁴

³⁴ Fiqh al-Riḍā, Page 152 | Man lā Yahḍhuraa 'l-Faqihī, Volume 1, Page 356 | al-Maḡnah, Page 49

﴿ 28 ﴾

‘Seeking the Best’ by Asking Others for Advice

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:

إِذَا أَرَادَ أَحَدُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَلَا يُشَاوِرُ فِيهِ أَحَدًا مِنَ النَّاسِ حَتَّى يَبْدَأَ
فِي شَاوِرِ اللَّهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى... تَبْتَدَأُ فَتَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ فِيهِ أَوَّلًا ثُمَّ تُشَاوِرُ
فِيهِ فَإِذَا بَدَأَ بِاللَّهِ أَجْرَى لَهُ الْخَيْرَ عَلَى لِسَانِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “Any time one of you wishes to do something, then do not ask the advice of anyone until you ask advice from Allāh, the Glorious and Most High...(in such a way that) you initially start out by asking Allāh for the best in that (act) and then you take advice from others in that action; thus, since you have first asked Allāh for what is best, then He will have whatever is best for you come out from the mouth of whosoever of His creations that He pleases.”³⁵

³⁵ Maā’ni al-Akhbār, Page 144 and 145 | Maḥāsin Barqī, Page 598 | Man Lā Yahdhura ‘l-Faqih, Volume 1, Page 355, Ḥadīth 1553 | al-Maḥnah, Page 36

﴿ 29 ﴾

The Method of 'Seeking the Best' by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:
إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَمْرًا فَلَا تُشَاوِرْ فِيهِ أَحَدًا حَتَّى تُشَاوِرَ رَبَّكَ... تَقُولُ
(أَسْتَحِيرُ اللَّهَ) مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ ثُمَّ تُشَاوِرُ النَّاسَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْرِي لَكَ
الْخَيْرَةَ عَلَى لِسَانِ مَنْ أَحَبَّ.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "If you wish to do anything, then do not consult anybody until you have consulted with your Lord...Say:

أَسْتَحِيرُ اللَّهَ

*(I seek the best from Allāh)) one hundred times and then seek consultation from people, since Allāh will make whatever is best for you (your answer) flow from the mouth of one whom He loves."*³⁶

The narrations regarding 'seeking the best' by way of consulting with others, in addition to confirming the need to ask others for advice and help, tell us that this action is very effective for one who is confused and does not know which path to choose. After reciting the supplications and asking Allāh ﷻ for what is truly the best, asking others for advice has been highly recommended.

Only with the help of Allāh ﷻ is one able to benefit from seeking council and advice from others to secure what is truly the best for ones' self. It is only with the humble supplications and asking Allāh ﷻ for the best that one can actually reach a state of satisfaction.

³⁶ Makārim al-Akhḷāq, Page 367 | Amāli Ṭūsi, Volume 1, Page 281 | Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 253, Ḥadīth 4

Seeking advice and council from others has been reckoned as one of the best teachers and guides; however, one should only seek council after asking Allāh ﷻ for what is best, and then seek advice from those people one is close to who are worthy of taking advice from.

People who are pious (Taqwā); those who keep away from following their low desires; the people who are humble towards their Lord; and those who have knowledge and experience in life are examples of people one should request help and advice from.

﴿ 30 ﴾

‘Seeking the Best’ by the Qur’ān
as done by the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ:

إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَنْ تَتَفَعَّلَ بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَاقْرَأْ سُورَةَ الْإِخْلَاصِ
ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ ثُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَآلِهِ ثَلَاثًا ثُمَّ قُلْ: ((اللَّهُمَّ تَفَعَّلْتُ
بِكِتَابِكَ وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَيْكَ فَأَرِنِي مِنْ كِتَابِكَ مَا هُوَ مَكْتُومٌ مِنْ
سِرِّكَ الْمَكْنُونِ فِي غَيْبِكَ)) ثُمَّ افْتَحِ الْجَامِعَ وَخُذِ الْفَالَ مِنْ
الْخَطِّ الْأَوَّلِ مِنَ الْجَانِبِ الْأَوَّلِ.

The Prophet of Allāh ﷺ said: “Whenever you want to seek the best by the Book of Allāh, the Glorious and Great, recite Sūrah al- Ikhlāṣ three times send blessings on the Prophet and his family three times, then say:

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

‘O’ Allāh! I am seeking the best by Your Book and I am relying upon You so show me from Your book that what is written from Your secrets and known from your Unseen Knowledge.’ Then open the Qur’ān and take what is best for you from beginning of the first line on the right side page.”

There is no problem or religious taboo in performing the Istikhāra by the Qur’ān since asking Allāh ﷻ for the best - whether it be by the Qur’ān or Tasbīh beads is permitted when a person can not come to a conclusion.

After reciting the supplications asking Allāh ﷻ for the best, research and investigation, and having asked others for advice, if one is still in doubt and indecisive whether to perform or to leave a certain task, then in this scenario he is permitted to turn to Allāh ﷻ, and either through the Tasbiḥ beads or the Qur’ān, seek guidance (from Allāh ﷻ). If the Istikhāra comes out “good”, then one should perform the task and be at ease; and if it comes out “bad”, then one should put complete trust and reliance upon Allāh ﷻ and not go through with one’s plans.³⁷

The method of determining whether the outcome is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ from the Qur’ān is that after all the etiquette and conditions of performing the Istikhāra by the Qur’ān have been fulfilled, if the verse that comes is one that contains a command to something good, a description of the Believers, the rewards of those who will dwell in Paradise, or the glad tidings of Paradise - then that Istikhāra will indicate ‘good’ and one should proceed with the intended act with peace in his heart.

However, if the verse that comes mentions the anger or punishment of Allāh ﷻ, prohibition from evil, descriptions of the non-Believers and hypocrites, explanation or description of the punishment of hell - then one should seek refuge with Allāh ﷻ and should not perform the intended task.

If the verse that comes is one in between these two types, then the Istikhāra should be taken as neutral.

³⁷ Taken from the Tafsir of the Qur’ān by ‘Allamāh Ṭabā’ṭabā’i - Volume 6, Page 188

Method of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:

إِذَا أَرَدْتَ الْإِسْتِخَارَةَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ الْعَزِيزِ فَقُلْ بَعْدَ الْبِسْمَلَةِ: ((إِنْ كَانَ فِي قَضَائِكَ وَقَدْرِكَ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى شِيعَةِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ بِفَرَجٍ وَلِيكَ وَحُجَّتِكَ عَلَى خَلْقِكَ فَأَخْرِجْ إِلَيْنَا آيَةً مِنْ كِتَابِكَ نَسْتَدِلُّ بِهَا عَلَى ذَلِكَ.)) ثُمَّ تَفْتَحُ الْمُصْحَفَ وَتَعُدُّ سِتَّ وَرَقَاتٍ وَمِنْ السَّابِعَةِ سِتَّةَ أَسْطُرٍ وَتَنْظُرُ مَا فِيهِ.

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "If you intend to perform the Istikhāra from The Noble Book (Qur'ān), then say:

إِنْ كَانَ فِي قَضَائِكَ وَقَدْرِكَ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى شِيعَةِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ بِفَرَجٍ وَلِيكَ وَحُجَّتِكَ عَلَى خَلْقِكَ فَأَخْرِجْ إِلَيْنَا آيَةً مِنْ كِتَابِكَ نَسْتَدِلُّ بِهَا عَلَى ذَلِكَ.

'In the Name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. (O' Allāh!) If in your plan and destiny which you have bestowed on the Shi'a of the family of Muḥammad with the speedy return of Your Guardian and Representative over Your creations, then show us a verse from Your Book that will guide us to it (that which is good).'

Then, open the book (Qur'ān) and go forward six pages and on the seventh page, look at the sixth line, and take (act upon) what is in that verse."³⁸

³⁸ Bihār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 246

By no means does the Istikhāra by the Qur’ān or with the Tasbīh beads, even after following the etiquette and all of the prerequisites, prevent one from using his brain or reasoning and seeking advice from others. This is also not ‘future-telling’.

Rather, if after one has thought about the task that one wants to perform, has weighed the pros and cons and has taken advice from others and is still in doubt, then at this point, these types of Istikhāras comes into play.

﴿ 32 ﴾

Istikhāra by the Qur'ān before Ṣalāt

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ:

... أَنْظِرْ إِذَا قُمْتَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ أَبْعَدُ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ
الْإِنْسَانِ إِذَا قَامَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ يَقَعُ فِي قَلْبِكَ فَخُذْ بِهِ أَوْ
إِفْتَحِ الْمُصْحَفَ فَانظُرْ إِلَى أَوَّلِ مَا تَرَى فِيهِ فَخُذْ بِهِ. إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ.

*al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "...when you wake up for the Ṣalāt, see what is in your heart and take that (step) since the devil is far away from the person who rises up for the Ṣalāt. Or, open up the Qur'ān and take what you see on the first line (on the right hand side of the page) and act upon it (and whatever is good for you will be in that), God Willing."*³⁹

That which has been mentioned in the beginning of this Ḥadīth regarding the performance of the Istikhāra by the Qur'ān is only after the Duā' and supplication for Istikhāra and asking the best from Allāh ﷻ have been exhausted. This form of Istikhāra is only permissible when doubt still remains after deep thinking, pondering on the subject, and seeking advice from others.

The above was mentioned since the relater of this Ḥadīth, Yasa' Qummī, had asked the Imām that when he intended to perform a certain action and had asked Allāh ﷻ to guide him to what was the best for him, but he did not come to a clear cut answer and doubt and indecision still existed within him. It was at this time that the Imām spoke the words that have been quoted above.

³⁹ Tahdhib al-Aḥkām, Volume 3, Page 310 | Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 243 | Wasā'il ash-Shi'a, Volume 3, Page 875, Ḥadīth 7819

﴿ 33 ﴾

Istikhāra by the Qur'ān – not by augury (future telling)

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ):
لَا تَتَغَالَ بِالْقُرْآنِ.

al-Imām Ja'far al-Şādiq (ع) said: “Do not perform the augury by the Qur'ān.”

The meaning of performing the augury by the Qur'ān (in the above Ḥadīth) which has been forbidden is to seek the knowledge of the unseen, foretelling future events, and trying to find out the outcome of actions that one will perform in the future.

However, seeking the best by the Qur'ān which has even been emphasized in the Holy Book, in reality, is just to remove doubt and uncertainty and to guide the person to choose one of two paths (either to perform or refrain from a certain act).

In addition, one must pay close attention to the fact that in no instance should the Istikhāra – be it by the Qur'ān, the Tasbīḥ beads, or papers - be performed before using one's own God-given intelligence or asking others for advice and guidance. These three types of Istikhāra do not specify one's responsibility, rather, they just guide a person and remove the doubt and uncertainty from one's mind, that too after the person has thought about the task, asked advice from others and is still at a dead end.

عَنْ 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-Qā'im عليه السلام regarding the Istikhāra by the tasbīh that: "The tasbīh should be taken (in the hand), and blessings should be sent on Muḥammad and his family عليهم السلام, three times, and then pick a sport on the beads and count them two by two. If at the end only one bead remains, then you should perform that action; and if two beads remain, then you should not perform it."*⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 91, Page 250, Ḥadīth 4
62

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الْبَاقِرَ عليه السلام:

إِذَا أَرَدْتَ أَمْرًا فَخُذْ سِتَّ رِقَاعٍ فَكْتُبْ فِي ثَلَاثٍ مِنْهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ خَيْرَةً مِنْ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِفُلَانِ بْنِ فُلَانَةَ أَفْعَلُهُ. وَفِي ثَلَاثٍ مِنْهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ خَيْرَةً مِنْ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِفُلَانِ بْنِ فُلَانَةَ لَا تَفْعَلْ. ثُمَّ ضَعَهَا تَحْتَ مُصْلَاكِكَ ثُمَّ صَلِّ رَكَعَتَيْنِ فَإِذَا فَرَعْتَ فَاسْجُدْ سَجْدَةً وَقُلْ فِيهَا مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ أَسْتَحِيرُ اللَّهَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ خَيْرَةً فِي عَافِيَةٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوِ جَالِسًا وَقُلِ اللَّهُمَّ خَيْرِ لِي وَاخْتَرِ لِي فِي جَمِيعِ أُمُورِي فِي يُسْرٍ مِنْكَ وَعَافِيَةٍ ثُمَّ أَضْرِبْ بِيَدِكَ إِلَى الرَّقَاعِ فَشَوِّشْهَا وَأَخْرِجْ وَاحِدَةً فَإِنْ خَرَجَ ثَلَاثُ مُتَوَالِيَاتٍ أَفْعَلْ فَافْعَلِ الْأَمْرَ الَّذِي تُرِيدُهُ وَإِنْ خَرَجَ ثَلَاثُ مُتَوَالِيَاتٍ لَا تَفْعَلْ فَلَا تَفْعَلُهُ وَإِنْ خَرَجَتْ وَاحِدَةً أَفْعَلْ وَالْأُخْرَى لَا تَفْعَلْ فَأَخْرِجْ مِنَ الرَّقَاعِ إِلَى خَمْسٍ فَاَنْظُرْ أَكْثَرَهَا فَاعْمَلْ بِهِ وَدَعِ السَّادِسَةَ لَا تَحْتَاجُ إِلَيْهَا.

al-Imām al-Bāqir عليه السلام said: "If you intend to do something, then take six pieces of paper and on three of them write:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ خَيْرَةً مِنْ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِفُلَانِ بْنِ فُلَانَةَ أَفْعَلُهُ

In the name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Goodness is from Allāh, the Great, the Wise for Fulān the son of Fulān (put your name here) he will do (it).

On the other three pieces of paper write:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ خَيْرَةٌ مِنْ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِفُلَانِ بْنِ
فُلَانَةَ لَا تَفْعَلْ

In the name of Allāh, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Goodness is from Allāh, the Great, the Wise for Fulān the son of Fulān (put your name here) he will not do (it).

Then place them under your prayer mat. Read a two rak'at Ṣalāt and when you finish, go into sajdah and recite the following one hundred times:

أَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ خَيْرَةً فِي عَافِيَةٍ

I seek that which is good from Allāh through His Mercy, the goodness for the outcome.

Then get up and while sitting say:

اللَّهُمَّ حِرْ لِي وَاحْتَرْ لِي فِي جَمِيعِ أُمُورِي فِي يُسْرٍ مِنْكَ وَ عَافِيَةٍ

Following this, with your hands shuffle the six papers and one by one choose three of them. If three of the cards come up with:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ خَيْرَةً مِنْ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِفُلَانِ بْنِ
فُلَانَةَ أَفْعَلُهُ

Then perform the action that you had intended to do. However, if three of the cards come up with:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ خَيْرَةً مِنْ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ لِفُلَانِ بْنِ
فُلَانَةَ لَا تَفْعَلْ

Then do not perform that action which you had intended to do. If one of the cards said to perform the act and the other one said not to perform the act, then pick up the cards until you have picked up five and see which of them is more and act according to it; and it is not necessary to pick up the sixth one.”⁴¹

⁴¹ Biḥār al-Anwār, Volume 88, Page 230, Ḥadīth 5 | al-Kāfi, Volume 3, Page 470

Section Seven

The Best Time to Perform an Istikhāra

﴿ 36 ﴾

Istikhāra after a two Rak'at Mustahab Ṣalāt

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ جَوَادُ الْعَلِيِّ:
...وَلْتَكُنْ الْإِسْتِخَارَةُ بَعْدَ صَلَاتِكَ رَكَعَتَيْنِ.

Imām al-Jawād ؑ said: "It is best that you seek the best (from Allāh) after a two rakat Ṣalāt."⁴²

﴿ 37 ﴾

Istikhāra after Ṣalāt

قال الإمام الصادق عليه السلام:
إِذَا أَرَادَ أَحَدُكُمْ شَيْئًا فَلْيُصَلِّ رَكَعَتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لِيُحَمِّدِ اللَّهَ وَ لِيُثْنِ عَلَيْهِ وَ
يُصَلِّيَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَ يَقُولُ: ((اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ
خَيْرًا لِي فِي دِينِي وَ دُنْيَايَ فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَ أَقْدِرْهُ وَ إِنْ كَانَ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ
فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي.))

Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “If any of you wish to do something, (then start off by) praying a two rak‘at Ṣalāt and praise and extol Allāh ﷻ and send blessings on the Prophet and his family عليه السلام, then say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ خَيْرًا لِي فِي دِينِي وَ دُنْيَايَ فَيَسِّرْهُ لِي وَ
أَقْدِرْهُ وَ إِنْ كَانَ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي.

O’ Allāh if there is good in this action for me in my religion and in my life, then make it easy for me and destine it for me; but if it is other than this, then turn it away from me.”⁴³

⁴³ Man Lā Yaḥḍuru al-Faḥīhi, Volume 1, Page 355, Ḥadīth 1554 | Tahḍīb al-Aḥkām, Volume 3, Page 180 | Wasā’il ash-Shi’a, Volume 8, Page 66, Ḥadīth 10099

﴿ 38 ﴾

Istikhāra after Ṣalāt al-Fajr

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عليه السلام:

إِذَا صَلَّيْتَ صَلَاةَ الْفَجْرِ فَقُلْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ يَدَيْكَ حِذَاءَ وَجْهِكَ:
(اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَامُ الْغُيُوبِ فَصَلِّ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ
وَأَلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَخِرْ لِي فِي جَمِيعِ مَا أَمَرْتُ بِهِ مِنْ أُمُورِي خِيَارَ بَرَكَاتٍ
وَعَافِيَةٍ.) ثُمَّ تَقُولُ فِي السَّجْدَةِ مِائَةَ مَرَّةٍ : ((أَسْتَحِيرُ اللَّهَ
بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُ اللَّهَ فِي عَافِيَةِ بِقُدْرَتِهِ.)) ثُمَّ أَتَى حَاجَتَكَ فَإِنَّهَا
خَيْرٌ لَكَ فِي كُلِّ حَالٍ.

Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: "When you have finished Ṣalāt al-Fajr, then lift up your hands such that they are in front of your face and say the following:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَامُ الْغُيُوبِ فَصَلِّ عَلَيَّ مُحَمَّدٍ
وَأَلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَخِرْ لِي فِي جَمِيعِ مَا أَمَرْتُ بِهِ مِنْ أُمُورِي خِيَارَ بَرَكَاتٍ
وَعَافِيَةٍ.

O' Allāh, verily You know (better) and we do not know and you are the Knower of the Unseen, so send blessings on Muḥammad and the family of Muḥammad and give me the best in all that I resolve to do of that which will be a blessing and good (for me).

Then go into sajdah and say the following line one hundred times:

أَسْتَحِيرُ اللَّهَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُ اللَّهَ فِي عَافِيَةِ بَقْدَرَتِهِ.

I ask the best from Allāh by Your Mercy, and I seek the power and strength to perform this good work from Allāh."

Then, ask for your (legitimate) desires since in this is what is good for you in whatever happens."

﴿ 39 ﴾

Istikhāra in the Final Sajdah of Ṣalāt al-Lail

قَالَ الْإِمَامُ الصَّادِقُ الْعَبَّاسِيُّ:
أَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ فِي أَحْسَرِ رَكْعَةٍ مِنْ صَلَاةِ اللَّيْلِ وَأَنْتَ سَاجِدٌ مِائَةً مَرَّةً
وَمَرَّةً تَقُولُ ((أَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ)).

al-Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: “In your final rakat of Ṣalāt al-Lail, while you are in sajdah, ask Allāh for the best by reciting the following one hundred and one times:

أَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ

“I seek the best from Allāh by His mercy.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Makārim al-Akhlāq, Page 320 | Man Lā Yaḥḍuru al-Faqihī, Volume 1, Page 355, Ḥadīth 1555

﴿ 40 ﴾

Istikhāra in the Final Sajdah of Nāfilah of Ṣalāt al-Fajr

قال الإمام الصادق عليه السلام:

أَنْ يَسْتَخِيرَ اللَّهُ الرَّجُلُ فِي آخِرِ سَجْدَةٍ مِنْ رَكَعَتِي الْفَجْرِ مِائَةَ
مَرَّةً وَ مَرَّةً تَحْمَدُ اللَّهَ وَ تُصَلِّي عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَ آلِهِ ثُمَّ تَسْتَخِيرُ اللَّهَ
خَمْسِينَ مَرَّةً ثُمَّ تَحْمَدُ اللَّهَ وَ تُصَلِّي عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَ تَمُّ الْمِائَةَ وَ
الْوَحْدَةَ.

Imām al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said the following regarding asking Allāh for the best: “In the final sajdah of the recommended prayers of Ṣalāt al-Fajr, one should seek the best from Allāh by praising Allāh and sending blessings on the Prophet and his family and then by asking Allāh for the best fifty times followed by praising Allāh and sending blessings on the Prophet one hundred and one times.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Wasā'il ash-Shi'a, Volume 8, Page 73, Ḥadīth 10112 | Man Lā Yaḥḍhu al-Faihi, Volume 1, Page 355, Ḥadīth 1556

Section Eight

Views of the Marā'ja Taqlīd and Scholars of Islām Regarding the Istikhāra

View of Āyatullāh Khomeinī علیه السلام

“There are two meanings of the word Istikhāra - one of them is the actual meaning and more than all the other types has been mentioned in our narrations (aḥādīth) and is the most common, and this is simply supplicating and asking Allāh ﷻ for the best.

This type of Istikhāra has its roots in supplicating (to Allāh ﷻ) in all actions that a person performs, and is not only admirable, but is recommended (*Mustaḥab*) in Islām.

The other meaning of Istikhāra is when a person is confused and perplexed about whether to perform an act or not, such that it (that act) is not something that Allāh ﷻ has ordered us to perform such that His guidance would be there nor that our intelligence could help us to decide if it is good or bad. If there is no way for a person to decide whether to perform a task or not, and in the state of confusion and uncertainty, instead of simply

guessing and performing the act, the person seeks refuge with the All-Knowing Allāh ﷻ, who all in distress turn towards and seek council from. Allāh ﷻ will either guide him through his heart and thus reveal to him which path to choose, since in reality, He is the Changer of hearts (in relation to the ‘spiritual Istikhāra’).

Otherwise, He will place the person’s hand on a certain part of the Tasbīḥ (if he is performing the Istikhāra by way of the Tasbīḥ beads), or he will guide His servant’s heart by the Qur’ān (if he is using the Qur’ān for his Istikhāra).

Is it not that a person who is confused, after using his own common-sense and asking advice and help from others in need of guidance so as to open his path? Can it be that a person, whose ‘lamp of thinking’ has gone dim and has sought help from others around him not in need of advice and guidance?

In one of the verses of the Qur’ān, Allāh ﷻ after mentioning and counting all of His powers and the blessings which He has showered says: “*Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil?*”⁴⁶

However, there are examples that people who are against Istikhāra mention, such as the incident in which there was a girl who liked a young boy and in all ways, were compatible with each other, but after talking with one another, the Istikhāra was performed and it came out 'bad' and the discussion ended there. Another example is about a person who wanted to purchase a house. Everything was fine and in all ways, the house was ideal – he performed an Istikhāra and it came out bad, so he decided not to purchase the house.

⁴⁶ Sūrah Naml (27) Verse 62

It is clear that the reply to them and thousands of people like these regarding the Istikhāra (and the proper use of it), is that in instances such as these, only one who has no intelligence, who is defiant, and who does not have a correct understanding of the Istikhāra would perform it in these instances.

It also goes without saying that the aḥādīth that have come to us with regards to the Istikhāra have not promised us that we will reach our goal without any troubles or difficulties. Rather, that which has been promised is that whosoever asks Allāh ﷻ for good, will be granted good. If it is good for the person in his worldly life, then he will be granted his wish; and if it not, then it will be stored for him and bestowed upon him in the next world.”

‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabā’tabā’i 

“When a person makes the intention to perform a certain act, then he has no choice but to investigate concerning it, and as much as he is able to, he must ponder and think – using the power that Allāh ﷻ has given him – whether or not to do that particular thing.

In the event that he is not able to come to a conclusion (if what is good for him is in that act), then he must ask others for advice and let his decision lie on the advice of others – those who are able to offer advice and have the ability to distinguish between good and bad.

He should rely on their rationale to come to a conclusion whether to proceed with an action or to leave it. If this route too does not produce results, then he is left with no other alternative except that he pleads to His Lord and asks Him for guidance to what is truly best for him.

In reality, this is the Istikhāra. This must not be referred to as ‘gaining knowledge of the unseen’ or an incursion on Allāh’s guardianship and mastership upon us.

In summary, there is no responsibility on the religion when one performs an Istikhāra, since the Istikhāra does nothing except determine which way a person should act. The Istikhāra does not change the rules of Allāh ﷻ nor does it inform the servant of Allāh ﷻ that what is hidden behind the curtains of Allāh’s knowledge. The only thing that an Istikhāra does is declare: “That what is in the prime interest of a person who is seeking the best is in the performance or non-performance of an act.”

The Istikhāra is the means from which one is saved from doubt and uncertainty. However, as for the after-effects that will happen in the future by either performing or not performing the action, they are not the responsibility of the Istikhāra, and the Istikhāra has no relation to this.

The future of a person who performs the Istikhāra – whether it will be good or bad – is just like the person who had not performed an Istikhāra and carried on with his life using his own intellect and asking advice from others. In short, the Istikhāra is nothing more than an act that provides “satisfaction of the heart,” “removes doubt and uncertainty,” and is a tool for “hope, prosperity and happiness.”

From the authentic narrations related from both the Shī‘a and the Ahl al-Sunnah, it has been mentioned that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ used to ask for the best and used to encourage those around him to do so. He forbid people to ridicule the Istikhāra and said, “Any time the Istikhāra comes out ‘bad’, have reliance on Allāh ﷻ and go on with the work.”

Therefore, there is no problem with performing an Istikhāra by way of the Qur’ān or other things, since if the Istikhāra comes out favourable, then the person will perform the action with a content heart and a pure soul; and if

it comes out bad, then he has relied upon Allāh ﷻ and should continue with his work.”

‘Allāmah Shahīd Murtaḍā Mutahharī رحمته الله

“...What kind of talk is this that the ‘Ulamā (only) must perform the Istikhāra! How many problems this misconception has brought up! An ‘Ālim is sitting in his house, busy studying or writing, the telephone rings and the person on the other end asks: ‘Sir! I am sorry to bother you, I need an Istikhāra...’

Regardless, I myself perform Istikhāra (for others), and I am not opposed to it, but it is better that each person performs an Istikhāra for himself. Some people have even said that it is not allowed for a person to perform an Istikhāra for someone else and everyone must perform it for himself!”

Āyatullah Shahīd Husayn Dastghaib Shirāzi رحمته الله

“Istikhāra literally means to ‘ask the best’ from Allāh ﷻ. O’ Allāh! I am perplexed and do not know if Your pleasure is in this task or not (which I wish to perform). I ask You to make apparent Your pleasure upon me.

However, in this state, it is necessary for one to supplicate to Allāh ﷻ, and the true Istikhāra is just this – supplication. If by this method, one’s confusion is not removed, then it is not a problem that to remove the doubt and uncertainty, then one acts according to that which has been mentioned in the narrations and by either the Tasbīḥ or the Qur’ān, he can seek to alleviate his difficulties.

However, two conditions must be fulfilled, the first is that the person must be in a state of supplication meaning that his state be such that he truly feels: ‘O’ Allāh! Please remove the doubt in me through the blessings of the Glorious Qur’ān.’

The second condition, which is the most important one, is understanding the context and meaning of the verses of the holy Qur’ān - including the particularities in relation to an Istikhāra.

It must be made known that the Qur’ān was not revealed simply to perform the Istikhāra. Rather, it is a book of knowledge and wisdom, which guides one to the paths of servitude of Allāh ﷻ. Don’t get me wrong, I am not opposed to performing the Istikhāra by the Qur’ān, but those two conditions must be primarily fulfilled.

In the event that after thinking, supplicating and asking others for advice, one still remains in a state of doubt, then the best way to remove this uncertainty, which has also been mentioned in the narrations, is to perform an Istikhāra, and that too by the method known as “Dhāt al-Raqā”⁴⁷ meaning the Istikhāra using papers, which even the most well-known Fuqahā’ (Scholars) used to perform.”

Āyatullah al-‘Uzmā Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Behjat

“Regarding the instances in which one should perform an Istikhāra - after seeking advice from those people who are well informed and knowledgeable, if there still remains doubt, then and only then should one perform an Istikhāra.

The various types and methods of Istikhāra have been mentioned in Mafātiḥ al-Jinān and the various books of aḥādīth. As for the question that is anyone able to perform an Istikhāra by the Qur’ān or Tasbīh beads for himself or not, it must be stated that if all the conditions and etiquette are followed, then it is not a problem.”

⁴⁷ Ḥadīth 35 as found in this book

Āyatullah al-‘Uzmā Shaykh Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī

“There are numerous narrations relating to the Istikhāra, and it in itself (the Istikhāra) is something that is good to perform. Many successful results have been seen from it, as long as thinking and contemplation, and seeking the advice from others proves to be not enough for the person to make up his mind to perform or not to perform a certain task.

In such a situation of doubt, it is in place to perform an Istikhāra. However, whatever the outcome may be, whether it is in accordance with one’s wishes or against one’s desires, it must be accepted. Anytime, one performs an Istikhāra by asking others for advice and help, one should accept that and must not proceed with the ‘traditional Istikhāra’, since it is clear that this was not a place to perform that Istikhāra.

However in this type of a situation, it is better than after waiting some time, give some charity, and then carries on with the task.

We have mentioned the conditions for a proper Istikhāra in writing and the people can refer to the book ‘Qawā’id al-Fiqhiha’ in the last discussion on ‘casting lots’ for more information.”

*Supplication from Imām ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn Zāin al-‘Ābidīn
peace be upon him, from al-Ṣaḥīfatul Sajjādiyyah*

The following Duā’ has been taught to us by the 4th Imām, al-Sajjad, peace be upon him, as he is commonly known. The Arabic and English Duā’ are as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَقْضِ لِي
بِالْخَيْرَةِ وَأَلْهِمْنَا مَعْرِفَةَ الْاِخْتِيَارِ، وَاجْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ذَرِيعَةً إِلَيَّ
الرِّضَا بِمَا قَضَيْتَ لَنَا وَالتَّسْلِيمِ لِمَا حَكَمْتَ. فَأَزِحْ عَنَّا رَيْبَ
الْاِرْتِيَابِ، وَابْيِّنْ لَنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ لِمُخْلِصِينَ، وَلَا تَسْمُنَا عَجْزَ لِمَعْرِفَةِ
عَمَّا تَخَيَّرْتَ، فَانْعَمِطْ قَدْرَكَ، وَنَكْرَهُ مَوْضِعِ رِضَاكَ، وَنَجِّنْ
إِلَى الَّتِي هِيَ أَبْعَدُ مِنْ حُسْنِ لِعَاقِبَةٍ وَأَقْرَبُ إِلَى ضِدِّ الْعَافِيَةِ.
حَبِّبْ إِلَيْنَا مَا نَكْرَهُ مِنْ قَضَائِكَ وَسَهِّلْ عَلَيْنَا مَا نَسْتَصْعَبُ مِنْ
حُكْمِكَ، وَأَلْهِمْنَا الْاِتْقِيَادَ لِمَا أوردتَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ مَشِيَّتِكَ
حَتَّى لَا نُحِبَّ تَأْخِيرَ مَا عَجَّلْتَ، وَلَا تَعْجِيلَ مَا أَخَّرْتَ، وَلَا
نَكْرَهُ مَا أَحْبَبْتَ، وَلَا نَتَخَيَّرَ مَا كَرِهْتَ، وَاخْتِمَ لَنَا بِالَّتِي هِيَ
أَحْمَدُ عَاقِبَةٍ وَأَكْرَمُ مَصِيرًا إِنَّكَ تُفِيدُ الْكَرِيمَةَ وَتُعْطِي
الْجَسِيمَةَ، وَتَفْعَلُ مَا تُرِيدُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

O' God,

I ask from Thee the best in Thy knowledge,
so bless Muḥammad and his Household
and decree for me the best!

Inspire us with knowledge to chose the best
and make that a means to
being pleased with what Thou hast decreed for us
and submitting to what Thou hast decided!
Banish from us the doubt of misgiving
and confirm us with the certainty of the sincere!

Visit us not with incapacity
to know what Thou hast chosen, lest we
despise Thy measuring out,
dislike the place of Thy good pleasure,
and incline toward that which is
further from good outcome
and nearer to the opposite of well-being!

Make us love what we dislike
in Thy decree
and make easy for us what we find difficult
in Thy decision!

Inspire us to yield
to that which Thou bringest upon us by Thy will,
lest we
love the delay of what Thou hast hastened
and the hastening of what Thou hast delayed,
dislike what Thou lovest,
and choose what Thou dislikest!

Seal us with that which is most praised in outcome
and most generous in issue!
Surely Thou givest generous gain,
bestowest the immense,
dost what Thou wilt,
and Thou art powerful over everything!