

How to perform Salaat al-Istikhaarah

All praises be to Allaah, Lord and Sustainer of the worlds, and may the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and upon his family and companions.

The description of Salaat al-Istikhaarah was reported by Jaabir ibn 'Abd-Allaah al-Salami (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said:

“The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to teach his companions to make istikhaarah in all things, just as he used to teach them soorahs from the Qur'aan. He said: “If any one of you is concerned about a decision he has to make, (or in the version narrated by Ibn Mas'ood as: “if any one of you wants to do something...) then let him pray two rak'ahs of non-obligatory prayer, then say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِيرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَتِكَ
وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ وَتَعْلَمُ
وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ
هَذَا الْأَمْرَ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ أُمْرِي
أَوْ قَالَ فِي عَاجِلِ أُمْرِي وَآجِلِهِ فَاقْدُرْهُ لِي وَإِنْ كُنْتَ
تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةِ
أُمْرِي أَوْ قَالَ فِي عَاجِلِ أُمْرِي وَآجِلِهِ فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي
وَاصْرِفْني عَنْهُ وَاقْدُرْ لِي الْخَيْرَ حَيْثُ كَانَ ثُمَّ
أَرْضِنِي بِهِ .

(O Allaah, I seek Your guidance [in making a choice] by virtue of Your knowledge, and I seek ability by virtue of Your power, and I ask You of Your great bounty. You have power, I have none. And You know, I know not. You are the Knower of hidden things. O Allaah, if in Your knowledge, this matter (then it should be mentioned by name) is good for me both in this world and in the Hereafter (or: in my religion, my livelihood and my affairs), then ordain it for me, make it easy for me, and bless it for me. And if in Your knowledge it is bad for me and for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs (or: for me both in this world and the next), then turn me away from it, [and turn it away from me], and ordain for me the good wherever it may be and make me pleased with it.”

(Reported by al-Bukhaari, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nisaa'i, Abu Dawood, Ibn Maajah and Ahmad).

Ibn Hajar (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, commenting on this hadeeth: **“Istikhaarah is a word which means asking Allaah to help one make a choice, meaning choosing the best of two things where one needs to choose one of them.”**

Istikhaarah is done when a decision is to be made in matters which are neither obligatory nor prohibited . So one does not need to do istikhaarah for deciding whether he should go for hajj or not, because if he is financially able to do it then hajj is obligatory and he does not have a choice.

Similarly one does not need to do istikhaarah for deciding whether he should give up smoking or not because smoking is haraam and must be given up.

But istikhaarah can be done in all kind of other permissible matters where a choice needs to be made such as buying something permissible, taking a job or choosing a spouse etc.

Misconceptions associated with Istikhaarah

Many people think that Salaat-al- istikhaarah can only be prayed after 'Ishaa prayer following which the person should go to sleep. This is a misconceptions, as in fact one can pray istikaarah at any time of the day and night.

Istikhaarah can also be done after two rak'ahs of regular sunnah prayer for example those prayed after zuhr, or after two rak'ahs of any naafil prayers whether they are regularly performed or not as long as one makes the intention to pray istikhaarah at the same time as intending to pray that particular prayer.

Some people think that one has to have a dream after Istikhaarah regarding the matter in question. This has no sound basis.

Doing istikaarah once is enough for one matter contrary to the belief of many people who think that one needs to do istikaarah constantly until they get a result.

It is also important to understand that doing istikaarah does not mean not doing any other efforts. Instead one should take every other possible action such as researching and investigating the matter to one's best ability, as well as seeking advice from knowledgeable and experienced people.

The du'aa' of istikaarah can be said either before or after saying salaam.

The purpose of the du'aa' is to seek guidance by virtue of Allaah's knowledge, power, generosity and His decree to make the matter easy for the one who is in need and is weak and unaware of unseen.

The secret is that one's heart should not be attached to the matter in question; because that will result in a person becoming restless rather one should be content and pleased with Allaah's decree.

We ask Allaah to help and guide us to do all that He is pleased with and his Peace and blessings be upon His last Prophet Muhammad.