

# Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:  
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## 11981 - Istikhaarah prayer

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### the question

I like to know more on prayers, Istikhaarah, What to recite, and the doa'a, how many rakaats and what benefit can I get. Hanafi Shafee, Hanabali are the prayers same way.

### Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Istikhaarah prayer is a Sunnah which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) prescribed for anyone who wants to do an action but is hesitant about it. Discussion of Istikhaarah prayer covers eight points:

1-Definition

2-Ruling

3-The wisdom behind prescribing it

4-Reasons for it

5-When Istikhaarah should be started

6-Consulting people before praying istikhaarah

7-What should be recited in istikhaarah

8-When should the du'aa' be recited?

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## 1 - Definition

Istikhaarah in Arabic means seeking guidance to make a decision concerning something. It is said in Arabic Istakhir Allaaha yakhir laka (Seek guidance from Allaah and He will guide you (to the right decision)). In sharee'ah terminology, Istikhaarah means seeking guidance (to the right decision), i.e., seeking guidance as to what Allaah knows is the best and most appropriate choice, by means of prayer or the du'aa' narrated concerning Istikhaarah.

## 2 - Ruling

The scholars are unanimously agreed that Istikhaarah is Sunnah. The evidence that it is prescribed is the hadeeth narrated by al-Bukhaari from Jaabir (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 matters, just as he used to teach them soorahs from the Qur'aan. He said: 'If any one of you is deliberating about a decision he has to make, then let him pray two rak'ahs of non-obligatory prayer, then say: Allaahumma inni astakheeruka bi 'ilmika wa astaqdiruka bi qudratika wa as'aluka min fadlika, fa innaka taqdiru wa laa aqdir, wa ta'lamu wa laa a'lam, wa anta 'allaam al-ghuyoob. Allaahumma fa in kunta ta'lamu haadha'l-amra (then the matter should be mentioned by name) khayran li fi 'aajil amri wa aajilihi (or: fi deeni wa ma'aashi wa 'aaqibati amri) faqdurhu li wa yassirhu li thumma baarik li fihi. Allaahumma wa in kunta ta'lamu annahu sharrun li fi deeni wa ma'aashi wa 'aaqibati amri (or: fi 'aajili amri wa aajilihi) fasrifni 'anhu [wasrafhu 'anni] waqdur li al-khayr haythu kaana thumma radini bihi (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

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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.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari in several places in his Saheeh (1166).

### **3 - The wisdom behind prescribing it:**

The reason why Istikhaarah is prescribed is that it is submission to the command of Allaah and a practical demonstration that one has no power and no strength of one's own. It means turning to Allaah and seeking to combine the goodness of this world and of the Hereafter. In order to achieve that, one has to knock at the door of the King, Allaah, may He be glorified, and there is nothing more beneficial in this regard than salaah (prayer) and du'aa' (supplication), because they involve venerating Allaah, praising Him and expressing one's need for Him. Then after praying istikhaarah one should do that which one feels is best.

### **4 - Reasons for it:**

In what circumstances should one pray istikhaarah? The four madhhabs are agreed that istikhaarah is prescribed in cases where a person does not know the right decision to make. In matters where it is known whether a thing is good or bad, such as acts of worship, doing good deeds, sins or evil actions, there is no need to pray istikhaarah in these cases. But if a person wants to find out the right time to do something, such as whether to do Hajj this year, because there is the possibility of encountering an enemy or some tribulation, or whether to go with a certain person or not, then he may pray istikhaarah with regard to such decisions. But there is no room for Istikhaarah when it comes to things that are obligatory, haraam or makrooh. Rather Istikhaarah has to do with things that are recommended or permissible. Istikhaarah is not ordinarily required with regard to things that are recommended, rather it should be done in cases where there is a conflict, i.e., when a person has a choice of two things and must decide which one

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to start with or which one not to do. With regard to permissible things, he may pray Istikhaarah as a regular matter.

## **5 - When should he start praying Istikhaarah?**

The person who wants to pray Istikhaarah should have an open mind, and not have decided on a specific course of action. The phrase “If any one of you is deliberating” indicates that Istikhaarah should be prayed when one starts to think of the matter, when through the blessing of prayer and du’aa’ what is good will become clear to him, in contrast to when the idea has taken root and his resolve to do it is firm, in which case his inclination will sway him, and there is the fear that wisdom may not prevail because he is inclined to do that which he has already decided to do. It may be that which is meant by deliberation here is resolve, because a passing thought does not matter. And a person should not pray istikhaarah except when he has decided to do something but does not have a strong inclination towards it. Otherwise, if a person were to pray Istikhaarah for every thought that crosses his mind, he would never stop and he would waste all his time doing that.

## **6 - Consulting others before praying istikhaarah**

Al-Nawawi said: It is mustahabb, before praying istikhaarah, to consult someone whom you know is sincere, caring and has experience, and who is trustworthy with regard to his religious commitment and knowledge. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and consult them in the affairs”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:159]

## **7 - What is to be recited in Salaat al-Istikhaarah**

There are three opinions as to what should be recited in Salaat al-Istikhaarah:

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(a)The Hanafis, Maalikis and Shaafa'is said that it is mustahabb, after reciting al-Faatihah, to recite Qul yaa ayyuha'l-kaafiroon in the first rak'ah and Qul huwa Allaahu ahad in the second. Al-Nawawi said, explaining the reason for that: It is appropriate to recite these in prayer, to show sincerity and expressing your leaving your affairs to Allaah. They said that it is also permissible to add other verses from Qur'aan where the context refers to the idea of making a choice or decision.

(b)Some of the Salaf said that in praying istikhaarah it is good to add, after reciting al-Faatihah, the following verses in the first rak'ah:

“And your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses, no choice have they (in any matter). Glorified is Allaah, and exalted above all that they associate (as partners with Him).

And your Lord knows what their breasts conceal, and what they reveal.

And He is Allaah; Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), all praises and thanks be to Him (both) in the first (i.e. in this world) and in the last (i.e. in the Hereafter). And for Him is the Decision, and to Him shall you (all) be returned”

[al-Qasas 28:68 - interpretation of the meaning]

And the following verse in the second rak'ah:

“It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allaah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allaah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into a plain error”

[al-Ahzaab 33:36 - interpretation of the meaning]

(c)The Hanbalis and some of the fuqaha' did not say that any particular verses are to be recited when praying Istikhaarah.

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## 8 - When one should pray Istikhaarah

The Hanafis, Maalikis, Shaafa'is and Hanbalis stated that the du'aa' should be recited immediately after the prayer. This is in accordance with what was stated in the hadeeth narrated from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). See al-Mawsoo'ah al-Fiqhiyyah, part 3, p. 241.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said in al-Fataawa al-Kubra: Part 2, p. 265 Question concerning Du'aa' al-Istikhaarah: should this du'aa' be recited during salaah (prayer) or after saying the salaam? The answer is that it is permissible to recite the du'aa' of istikhaarah before or after the salaam, whether you are praying salaah al-istikhaarah or another prayer. Reciting du'aa' before the salaam is preferable, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to recite a lot of du'aa' before the salaam, and the worshipper before saying the salaam still in a state of prayer, so it is better to recite the du'aa' then.

And Allaah knows best