Questions:

Is it true that according to the Maliki madhhab, one only says salam at the end of the prayer when praying alone, by saying, “as-salama `alaykum?”

If so, what is the reasoning behind this?

Also, does one say “bismillah,” and seek refuge from Shaytan before the recitation of the fatihah in all raka’at or the first rak’ah?

Answered by Shaykh Hamza Maqbul:

Bismillahir Rahamanir Raheem

It is true that Imam Malik’s opinion was that the prayer ends with one salam, by saying “as-salama `alaykum.” This much has been mentioned by Imam Ibn Abi Zayd al-Qayrawani (d. 998, 389ه) in his Risalah. Such has also been attributed to Imam Malik through many narrations; Imam Hattab (d. 1547م, 954ه), the great Shaykh of the Malikis in Makkah, may Allah increase it in its inviolable sanctity, writes in Mawahib al-Jalil his famous commentary on the Mukhtasar of Shaykh Khalil((d. 1374م, 776ه)):

“The author (i.e. Shaykh Khalil) did not explicitly mention the ruling of the Imam (of a congregation) and the one who prays alone, although it is understood by his wording that neither of them should say but one salam, and that is (indeed) the agreed-upon verdict (mashhur) of the madhhab.

(Shaykh Khalil further) says in (his book) al-Tawdhih: „Imam Malik said „It, (i.e. one salam) is the `amal (or the custom of the people of Madinah in the time of the sahabah and tabi`un, may Allah be pleased with them).” This (statement) has been narrated in this wording by Ibn Yunus. Indeed the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him said one salam, as did Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Uthman, and other than them.

Imam Malik has stated in other than the Mudawwanah: „Just as a person enters the prayer by one takbir, so does he exit from it with one salam.”

Imam Hattab later says in Mawahib al-Jalil,

“(Imam Sanad ((d. 1146م, 541ه)) said in al-Tirraz, „Imam Malik used as his proof, the custom which he found the people (i.e. the sahabah and tabi`un) upon in Madinah: this is (for him) the strongest (of proofs). Verily, the prayer was legislated upon everyone, and demanded from all (slaves of Allah. For this reason) nothing can be established as necessary (in it) except through something which is well-known, which can only be referenced through unbroken customs. Such (unbroken customs exist) in the `amal of the people of Madinah, for verily it is the abode of hijrah, in it the shari`ah took firm root, and in it was the soul taken of the Messenger of Allah (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). After him, the khulafa’ established in it the congregational prayer exactly like it was established the day he was taken, and the later people”s (i.e. the tabi`un’s) custom was connected with that of the earlier ones (i.e. the sahabah).”
As for the wording of the salam being “as-salamu `alaykum this is mentioned explicitly by Imam Malik in al-Mudawwanah al-Kubra, the most well-known collection of his fatwas, in the chapter regarding entering the prayer:

“Ibn al-Qasim narrates that Imam Malik said, „No salam from the prayer is sufficient, except to say „as-salamu `alaykum and no way of entering the prayer is sufficient, except to say „Allahu Akbar.””

This is corroborated by the fact that in the entire collection of hadith, one cannot find an example of the messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, entering or exiting the prayer in any way other than that mentioned above. Note, however, that if one is praying behind one who says “as-salamu `alaykum wa rahmatullah,” this does not invalidate the prayer, as the required “as-salamu `alaykum” was said in it; it is merely an non-optimum statement which was not in conformance with the `amal of the people of Madinah described by Imam Sanad above.

To answer the other question regarding seeking refuge in Allah, saying bismillah, or reciting any other du’a in the first or any rak’ah of the prayer before the fatihah, we continue where we left off from the very same place in al-Mudawwanah al-Kubra above:

“(Ibn al-Qasim) said that Imam Malik did to not hold an opinion in favor of people of saying subhanak Allahumma wa bi-hamdika wa ta’ala jadduka wa la ilaha ghayruka, and to him, it wasn”t something established. Ibn Wahb narrates from Sufyan bin `Uyaynah, from Qatadah, from Ayyub bin Di`amah from Anas bin Malik, that the Messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthman would begin the prayer by (immediately reciting) alhamdu lillahi rabbil-`alamin.

(Ibn al-Qasim further) said that Imam Malik said that one who is (praying) behind an Imam, by himself, or Imam should not say subhanak Allahumma wa bi-hamdika wa ta’ala jadduka wa la ilaha ghayruka. Rather they should say the takbir and (immediately) begin reciting (the fatihah).”

This is corroborated by the hadith of Sahih Bukhari:

“Hafs bin `Umar narrates to us from Shu`bah, from Qatadah from Anas that the messenger of Allah, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, Abu Bakr, and `Umar, used to begin their prayers by reciting the fatihah.”

And Allah Knows Best.

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