

## Where did Imam Malik place his hands during prayer and why?

Explained by Shaykh Sulayman Ar Ruhaylee

**Question:** Some of our brothers pray with their hands down by their sides during the standing portion of the prayer. When we tell them to place their hands upon their chest they said: 'Our school of thought is Maliki, we pray with our hands down by our side'. Did Imam Malik pray with his hands down by his side?

**Shaykh Sulayman:** There is no doubt – O brothers – the Sunnah is to place the right hand over the left hand on the chest during the prayer. Imam Malik – may Allah have mercy upon him – is from the Imams of the Sunnah, and a scholar with tremendous virtue amongst this Ummah. He used to exalt the Sunnah with extreme veneration. He used to say: "Everyone's statement can be accepted or rejected except for the person inside this grave". And he would point to the grave (of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him) because he was in Madinah in the Prophet's Masjid peace be upon him. Due to his sincere intention Allah gave him followers and he continues to be remembered and those after him supplicate for him may Allah have mercy upon him and reward him with the best reward on behalf of the Ummah of Muhammad peace be upon him.

Imam Malik narrated in the Muwatta that the Messenger of Allah peace be upon him used to place his right hand over his left hand during the prayer. And it was the practice of Imam Malik may Allah have mercy upon him that if he viewed there was a reason a hadith should not be implemented he would say at the end of the narration 'and our action is not in accordance with this'; meaning the action of the scholars of Madinah was not in accordance with this. So we looked to see did Imam Malik say this at the end of this Hadith? The answer is no. He did not say this. And this is how we know that Imam Malik worked in accordance to this Hadith.

If someone says to us 'then why has it been said that Imam Malik prayed with his hands down by his side'?

I say: Al Hafidh ibn Abdul Bar Al Maliki mentioned in At Tamhid that Imam Malik may Allah have mercy upon him was requested to take a position as a judge and he refused. This is because whoever is appointed as a judge has been slaughtered without a knife. Thus he refused to be appointed as a judge, so he was beaten and his arm

became disabled. Consequently he was not able to raise his arm. So those who saw him praying like that, transmitted that about him thinking this was due to his school of thought; while this was not actually from his school of thought.

During the end of Imam Malik's life – may Allah have mercy upon him – he didn't go out for congregational prayer. So can we say that the school of thought for Imam Malik is that the man doesn't go out for congregational prayer? No; never. Rather Imam Malik – may Allah have mercy upon him – became sick during the end of his life with an illness which prevented him from going to the Masjid. He used to say: 'Everyone with an excuse is not able to reveal his excuse'. This is because his excuse was hidden from the people and was not suitable to mention.

Therefore we say: Our belief is the school of thought for Imam Malik – may Allah have mercy upon him – was to place the right hand over the left hand in the prayer; because he narrated this in his Muwatta. The four Imams, Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad all have said: "If a Hadith is authentic then this is my school of thought". And Imam Malik authenticated the Hadith of placing the right hand over the left hand in prayer; and the proof of this is that he narrated it in the Muwatta. Thus we say: Placing the right hand over the left hand in the prayer is the school of thought for this noble Imam. May Allah have mercy upon him and forgive him.