

Tazkiyah Halaqa
The Rituals – Session 16
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh
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Wellness Centre, London, Ontario

Overview

This session initiates a transition from the inner work of self-honesty into the outward domain of *rituals*, beginning with ṣalāh and the spiritual meanings embedded in its postures. Sheikh Adnan frames the prayer not as a set of movements to complete quickly, but as a structured encounter with Allah that can cultivate presence, love, and reverence when approached correctly. The primary focus is on qiyām and recitation as an act of dignified “presentation” before Allah, alongside practical strategies for gradually rebuilding concentration in prayer.

Qiyām and the Dignity of Recitation

Sheikh Adnan emphasises that Qur’anic recitation belongs in qiyām because it is the posture of upright integrity: the believer stands with head held high, reciting Allah’s own words back to Him. He cautions against treating Qur’an recitation as something performed in a posture of lowliness, because the act of reciting the Divine speech is itself an honour and should be approached with composure and dignity. In contrast, sujūd represents the ultimate humility—placing one’s face on the ground in a way that is permitted for no one except Allah—making it a lived expression of tawḥīd and exclusive servitude.

Maintaining a Personal Khatmah

A major practical recommendation is to maintain “some form of khatmah” within one’s prayers—meaning a continuous cycle of recitation, even if limited to whatever one has memorised. Sheikh Adnan suggests that keeping track of where one is in recitation forces attentiveness (remembering which sūrah or āyāt come next), which in turn trains the mind towards presence rather than autopilot worship. He also urges an honest appraisal of one’s memorisation: if a lifelong Muslim finds what they know to be “pathetic,” that realisation should become a constructive motivation to build a yearly plan for increasing Qur’an, while converts and non-Arabic speakers should proceed without shame and with gradual learning.

Love for the Qur’an as Relationship

Sheikh Adnan frames the Qur’an as the most intimate point of connection with Allah available to the believer: Allah cannot be touched or seen in this life, but His speech is present and recitable, and that is what the servant “has” of Him. He argues that if a person does not love Allah’s words enough to invest in them, then the relationship is already damaged before it properly begins. He highlights the ummah’s historical devotion to preserving the Qur’an—down to exact pronunciation and tone—as a sign of reverence, and he encourages participants to embody that same seriousness in their own recitation.

Small Adjustments for Khushū‘

Rather than attempting a sudden overhaul, Sheikh Adnan advises gradual, manageable changes that retrain the worshipper’s inner state over time. Key steps include:

- Remembering that wuḍū' is not only bodily cleansing but also carries a spiritual dimension.
- Taking a brief pause (roughly ten seconds) before starting prayer to recollect what is about to happen and to slow the mind's momentum.
- Choosing one theme from Sūrat al-Fātiḥah to reflect on for a week, rather than trying to contemplate everything at once.
- Avoiding default short sūrahs that "roll off the tongue," and instead adding small increments (two or three āyāt) that require attention and intentionality.

Balancing Qiyām and Sujūd

Sheikh Adnan critiques an imbalanced prayer in which qiyām is rushed in seconds while sujūd is extended for many minutes, arguing that the structure of ṣalāh calls for proportionality and coherence. He explains that the Prophet's long qiyām was not an impossible feat, but a reflection of deep understanding: extended recitation becomes a "build-up" that prepares the servant to ask in sujūd with greater meaning and readiness. He illustrates this with the narration of Ibn Mas'ūd praying behind the Prophet while he recited long sūrahs (including al-Baqarah, al-Nisā', and Āl 'Imrān) with clarity and measured pace—showing that such worship becomes spiritually believable when the purpose of ṣalāh is truly understood.

Why Jamā'ah Feels Easier

The session closes by highlighting a mercy of congregational prayer: the ma'mūm is relieved of many burdens of planning and execution. In jamā'ah, the imām carries responsibility for length, recitation choice, and pacing, while those behind can listen, reflect, and receive reward without the internal struggle of managing every element. Sheikh Adnan notes that communities often resist even small changes in prayer length when ṣalāh is not being "enjoyed," but he encourages people to start from where they are and introduce these adjustments slowly so that prayer becomes life-giving rather than unbearable.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViCenQmV2ds>