

**Tazkiyah Halaqa
Mortality – Session 27
Sheikh Adnan Rajeh**

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Wellness Centre, London, Ontario

Overview

This session revisits the mortality pillar while warning that tazkiyah concepts can **harm** if consumed as “interesting information” without contemplation and internalisation. Sheikh Adnan explains that these topics were traditionally delivered in very small doses (even a single line) precisely because they require time to digest, and he notes that open, public-style delivery can dilute their benefit if listeners do not reflect and follow up. He then restates the central frame: the focus is “accepting mortality” (finitude), not the unknowable moment of death itself.

Mortality as the “opposite” that gives meaning

He reasserts a key philosophical argument from earlier sessions: concepts gain meaning through their opposites, so life is only definable and appreciable because death exists as its contrast (as sweetness is known through sour/salt, and health through illness). Mortality is therefore necessary for motivation, meaningfulness, values, principles, and moral structure; without it, much of human striving collapses. He emphasises that none of this makes mortality “pleasant”—death remains sad and fearsome in a natural way—but the task is to understand what exactly is being feared and how to respond to it.

Sleep as a “miniature death”

Sheikh Adnan uses sleep as an accessible analogue: in Qur’anic framing, Allah takes souls at death and also takes them during sleep, returning them to those who still have time remaining. He notes that the experience of losing consciousness (especially without dreaming) resembles the “absence” people associate with death, which is why some children resist sleep—because it feels like being gone. This analogy is used to make mortality less abstract and to show that humans already experience a recurring “preview” of discontinuity and return.

From fear to preparation (istidād)

A central transition is from fear (especially fear of nothingness) to **preparation**: because death is inevitable and universal, the rational posture is istidād—readiness and structured living. He reiterates the Muslim corrective: death is not annihilation but a transition, so a believer should not fear “nothingness”; rather, one may fear the unknown details of transition and—more importantly—fear *ḥisāb* (accountability), while also hoping to “meet Allah” in a good state. He signals that preparation will vary depending on the specific fears a person carries and that he will develop this further in the following session.

Abu Hazm and Sulaiman ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (illustrative story)

He recommends reading the historical conversation between the Umayyad caliph Sulaiman ibn ‘Abd al-Malik and the scholar Abu Hazm (Salamah ibn Dinar), highlighting one pivotal exchange: when asked why people hate death, Abu Hazm responds (in essence) that they

built the dunya and ruined the Akhirah, so they dislike moving from what is “built” to what is “ruined.” Sheikh Adnan then uses the sequel of the story as a practical illustration of preparation: Sulaiman’s end-of-life sincerity is linked to his decision to appoint ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz as successor (not his own son), a choice presented as a rare act of reform-oriented, Akhirah-driven leadership. The takeaway is that meaningful preparation is always possible—even for someone deeply entangled in power—so “I don’t know what to do” is rarely true.

“I haven’t lived yet” and dying angry

He describes a recurring clinical and pastoral phenomenon: some older patients facing death (including Muslims) respond with anger and protest—“keep me here; I haven’t lived yet”—while some non-Muslims appear more at peace. His interpretation is that end-of-life distress often tracks whether a person experienced **meaning** and fulfilment in life (living by conviction), rather than merely whether the person held a religious label. He argues that if someone lived Islam as external social restrictions they never believed in, rather than as a joyful, meaningful way of life, they may reach death feeling they never truly lived—making mortality discussions premature until the person learns how to live with purpose and sincerity.

Not knowing death-time: gift or curse?

He poses a reflective question: is it a gift or a curse that one does not know the timing of death? He acknowledges the intuitive argument for “knowing” (it could prompt tawbah and last preparations) and notes that ageing/illness can function as a partial warning, citing the Prophetic idea that reaching 60 constitutes a form of fair notice. He then introduces a deeper tazkiyah claim: **mortality is the nafs’ kryptonite**, the key tool that allows mujahadah (striving against the nafs), because the nafs fears death more than anything—whereas the rūḥ is not fundamentally afraid, as it continues beyond bodily death. This becomes a major thesis: without internalised mortality and accountability, the nafs retains the upper hand and corrupts intentions; with it, the believer gains leverage to act selflessly and consistently.

Closing direction

He closes by contrasting two cultural framings: while death is an “enemy” in the sense that it is not celebrated and life should be preserved, treating death as the ultimate evil that justifies abandoning all values is rejected. Instead, life is prolonged for worship, repentance, service, and enjoying Allah’s creation—but when death arrives at its appointed time, it is understood as “being called home.” He notes that the next session may be the last specifically on mortality before transitioning into accountability (ḥisāb/resurrection), and he plans a focused Q&A later, asking that questions stay tightly connected to the mortality topic.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPelx-v9sKE>