

UNAWARENESS: A SLY THREAT

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The state of unawareness

Characteristics of unaware individuals

The reasons for unawareness

Escaping unawareness

The result of unawareness

Conclusion

Introduction

The happy and joyful movements of a small child amuse people. The hard decisions and reactions to events that are so important to adults, such as economic crises, natural disasters, wars, and oppression, have no meaning for them. As long as they are not hungry or thirsty or have lost a toy, they live in contentment, unaware of what is going on around them. And as long as they are content, they unconsciously go on sleeping, playing, and laughing.

However, although it may not be obvious at first, many people are hardly different from children when it comes to their level of awareness. This characteristic is especially evident in their lack of appreciation for such important matters as Allah's (God's) existence and the Hereafter, the purpose of their creation, the certainty of death, and the account they will give to Him in the Hereafter for every action or thought while alive.

Most people live according to their own desires and intentions, unaware of Allah's commands and prohibitions, even though He informs us of them through clear signs. They only want to enjoy the world's pleasures, be happy, and satisfy their own egos. They pursue its temporary allurements to the exclusion of all else, working all their lives to get what they want. Their greatest worries are that their efforts be in vain and that they will lose what they already have.

However, this short life and everything pertaining to it will one day come to an end. Unaware of the eternal punishment awaiting all those who lived their lives without making any attempt to please Allah, they head toward the Day of Judgment—a day of great fear and distress for them. But they continue to desire the world's transitory allurements and worry only about losing them.

This unconscious, insensible, and uninterested attitude, which they insist upon following despite His clear evidences, commands, and warnings, is known as "unawareness."

Allah has created blessings, including their own bodies and many beautiful things wherever they may look, to remind human beings of His existence. At every moment and in every place, we see that creation is imbued with countless wonders:

In the creation of the heavens and Earth, and the alternation of the night and day, and the ships that sail the seas to people's benefit, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky-by which He brings the ground to life when it was dead and scatters about in it creatures of every kind-and the varying direction of the winds, and the clouds subservient

between heaven and Earth, there are Signs for people who use their intellect. (Surat al-Baqara: 164)

Think of everything that happens and everything you see while you are awake. When you get up and look in the mirror, you see your body regenerated after a long sleep and notice how it continues to function perfectly without your interference. You see your body just as it was yesterday—your symmetrical and esthetically shaped body that started from the division of a single cell and now contains about 100 trillion of them; your body in which hundreds of complex functions occur in a perfect sequence of which you are not even aware.

But most people pay no attention to these facts. When looking in the mirror, all they see is what their face generally looks like or if their hair is combed. They think of nothing except work, school, or what they are going to do that day. Thus they fail to realize that every new day offers them another opportunity to draw closer to Allah. Perhaps this will be their last opportunity to do so, for this might be their last day on Earth. Most people, who cannot appreciate the value of this opportunity, generally busy themselves with trying to please only themselves or others. We can explain this with the following example:

Think of a general knowledge quiz. The winner will win a great deal of money. How will the contestants behave during the contest? Will they look around distractedly instead of listening to the questions and thinking of the answers? Will they criticize the host's shirt, tone of voice, or hairstyle? Instead of concentrating on the answer, will they think about what they are going to do or wear tomorrow?

Quite the contrary. The contestants would listen carefully to the host and try to use the limited time in the best possible way. They would concentrate on coming up with the answers by being interested in nothing except the matter at hand. If they were to engage in the type of meaningless behavior just cited, then we would think that they are bewildered, have a closed mind, or are irrational; in other words, unaware.

But many people have fallen into a far more serious state of unawareness: a way of life that is completely divorced from Allah's commands and prohibitions. This condition is caused by their unawareness that He created them only to serve Him.

Unawareness poses a severe threat to everyone who is careless and fails to submit to Allah sincerely. Such people continue to be unaware of their true situation until they begin to sincerely abide by the Qur'an's commands and prohibitions and do their best to remain aware at all times. Therefore, all readers of this book should acknowledge the possibility that they could have a certain degree of unawareness within themselves and realize that no one is immune to or safe from this insidious danger: Allah says in the Qur'an: **"No indeed! Truly humanity**

is unbridled, seeing himself as self-sufficient” (Surat al-‘Alaq: 6-7). After people set aside their imaginary immunity and accept the Qur’an as their guide, they can analyze their situation, try to correct their errors and mistakes, and eventually overcome their unawareness. The main reason why people persist in their unawareness, thereby allowing it to grow stronger every day, is that they are content with their own supposed perfection.

This book aims to familiarize readers with the idea of unawareness in the Qur’an and to warn them against this insidious threat, help them determine if they have fallen into a state of unawareness or ignorance and show them to escape it, and call upon believers to be careful and alert at all times in order to avoid satan’s traps.

THE STATE OF UNAWARENESS

Unawareness, as briefly defined in the introduction, is the condition of those people who are either unaware of Allah's existence and the Hereafter, or, if they are aware, do not have the requisite sense of responsibility. As a result, they are unaware and careless. Sometimes, believers can become temporarily unaware due to a transient forgetfulness or distraction. In the case of unbelievers or those who ascribe equals to Allah, this can be a life-long condition that affects every aspect of life.

Many people do not wonder why they were created; rather, they dally in the desires of their egos and therefore lead empty and useless lives. Following the logic of "living for the moment," they seek to attain only the best and to enjoy as many of the world's pleasures as they can. For them, what counts is making the best of their time, imagining that "we only have one life." Thus, they try to fill their allotted days with as much pleasure and enjoyment as possible. They know they are going to die, and yet they are unaware of the eternal punishment awaiting them in Hell. And because they cannot conceive of Allah's supreme power, they underestimate just how severe this punishment will be. (For details, see Harun Yahya's *Death, Resurrection, Hell*). Some of the related verses areas follows:

If only you could see those who do wrong at the time when they see the punishment, that truly all strength belongs to Allah , and that He is severe in punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 165)

That Day no one will punish as He punishes, and no one will shackle as He shackles. (Surat al-Fajr: 25-26)

When they are flung into it (Hell), they will hear it gasping harshly as it seethes. It all but bursts with rage. Each time a group is flung into it, its custodians will ask them: "Did no warner come to you?" (Surat al-Mulk: 7-8)

Hell will suffice as a Searing Blaze! As for those who reject Our Signs, We will roast them in a Fire. Every time their skins are burned off, We will replace them with new skins so that they can taste the punishment. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise. (Surat an-Nisa': 55-56)

Most unaware individuals know of Allah's existence but do not have an accurate knowledge of Islam. Therefore, they do not submit to Him. As a result,

their lack of absolute trust in Him causes them to experience deep pain and sorrow when confronted with difficult and distressing situations. The smallest anxiety is enough to upset their lives, and they are known for their pessimism, unhappiness, and depression.

They pass long periods doing useless and meaningless things, which they call “being busy.” But this “useless busyness,” which makes them feel so important and indispensable, is just an empty distraction that fans the flames of their unawareness. In the Qur’an, Allah describes these vain distractions:

It may be that those who are unbelievers will wish that they had been Muslims. Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves. Let false hope divert them. They will soon know. (Surat al-Hijr: 2-3)

Unawareness is like an insidious disease that engulfs those who have forgotten Allah and the Hereafter, that anesthetizes the mind and shrouds the intelligence. This drowsy unawareness prevents them from understanding the realities that assail and await them. Despite their power to see and hear, such people can no longer accurately interpret and judge what they see and hear. In fact, it shrouds their minds to such an extent that they spend all of their time trying to satisfy the endless desires of their egos. They can think of nothing else, for they have already transformed their desires and passions into deities:

Have you seen him who has taken his whims and desires to be his deity? Will you, then, be his guardian? Do you suppose that most of them hear or understand? They are just like cattle. Indeed, they are even further astray! (Surat al-Furqan: 43-44)

One important aspect of unawareness is its ability to alienate people from reality and cause them to live in a dream world. For example, young people always think of the future and may feel happy thinking that their dreams will come true. As they get older, their dreams become more restricted and they try to relive them through souvenirs and reminders. Older people can easily find many memories to share with their loved ones, and retelling their memories lets them relive the excitement or sorrow of that moment.

With their minds fully occupied by dreams and memories, they have no room for those realities that deserve their full attention: the Hereafter, the Garden, and Hell. They are not connected to Allah, either in what they think or feel, and conceive of reality as just an unwanted, indistinct, dark space between dreams and memories. When reality somehow finds its way into their minds, they immediately stop thinking about it and return to their daydreams.

Unawareness can be compared to how people with poor eyesight see the world through an indistinct haze. They cannot see anything clearly or in detail until they put on their glasses. Only after doing that will they become aware of how little they could see without their glasses. Perhaps they had not seen anything at all.

Unaware people also have a similar (but more serious) type of conception deficiency: they cannot properly appreciate Allah's existence, splendor, and honor. But when they approach Him with a true heart, pray to Him, contemplate Him, and respect the boundaries He has set for humanity, He may remove this deficiency so that they can obtain a clear understanding of reality.

THE UNAWARENESS OF DENIERS

The inner state of those who deny Allah's existence and cannot stand to have His name be remembered or mentioned is considered to be the final stage of unawareness. Such people, who flounder in denial, are unloved and condemned by Allah. In addition, they have many negative and unpleasant attributes.

Deniers are rebellious, arrogant, selfish, irritable, hypocritical, and unbalanced liars who are ready to engage in any wickedness. When it is a question of their gaining an advantage, they become so overwhelmed with worldly ambition that they no longer even recognize their own father or mother. Ignoring all limits that stand in the way of getting their own way, they resort to falsity, immorality, and lawlessness to overcome all obstacles.

Their consciences are shrouded, and so they have no sense of mercy, compassion, and pity. Having no sensitivity toward those around them, they live only for themselves and to satisfy the selfish desires and passions of their egos. Their minds are so clouded by unawareness that they never think about Allah or even remember His name:

When Allah, the One and Only, is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink back, shuddering. (Surat az-Zumar: 45)

They deny the Hereafter's existence and, to appease their consciences and justify their behavior, disparage religion and try to draw others down the same path. They are not aware of the wickedness they commit or of the eternal punishment awaiting them:

As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their actions appear good to them, and they wander about blindly. Such people will receive an evil punishment and will be the greatest losers in the Hereafter. (Surat an-Naml: 4-5)

We created many of the jinn and humanity for Hell. They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf: 179)

As we see, deniers ignore the promised eternal punishment. Moreover, they are described in the Qur'an as being lower than animals, because they have been

engulfed by unawareness. In other words, they are happy only when eating, drinking, and enjoying themselves, for they focus only on this world and are content to remain unaware of what is really important:

They know an outward aspect of this world's life, but are heedless of the Hereafter. (Surat ar-Rum: 7)

Such people think only of this worldly life, even though Allah has sent prophets and messengers, as well as holy books and believers, throughout history to warn them of the Day of Judgment, when they will have to account for themselves. They have been reminded of their sins and that these will not be forgotten on that day. They have heard what will happen to them if they do not obey Allah's commands and prohibitions, continue to ignore His advice, and do not repent of their wicked and corrupt lives: they will be rewarded with Hell's endless punishment. The only way to avoid all these is to heed His warnings and correct their attitudes, live in a way that earns His pleasure so that they will not disgrace themselves on the Day of Judgment. However, only some of them will listen:

Humanity's reckoning has drawn very close to them, yet they heedlessly turn away. (Surat al-Anbiya': 1)

The unawareness of those who have gone astray

Some individuals do not practice Islam according to the Qur'an, but according to what they have learned in their community and from their elders. In other words, they have inherited a false religious tradition from their ancestors and named it "Islam." For this reason, even if they read the Qur'an they interpret it incorrectly. They are unaware of the truth handed down in the Qur'an and the sayings of our Prophet (saas), and thus cannot be considered true believers:

When they are told: "Follow what Allah has sent down to you," they say: "We are following what we found our ancestors doing." What, even though their ancestors did not understand a thing and were not guided! (Surat al-Baqara: 170)

When they are told: "Come to what Allah has sent down and to the Messenger," they say: "What we found our ancestors doing is enough for us." What! Even if their ancestors did not know anything and were not guided! (Surat al-Ma'ida: 104)

When they are told: “Follow what Allah has sent down,” they say: “No, we will follow what we found our ancestors doing.” What! Even if satan is calling them to the punishment of the Blazing Fire? (Surah Luqman: 21)

It is stated in the Qur'an that these people do not practice the commands and prohibitions Allah prescribed in the Qur'an, but those devised by their ancestors. It is obvious from the Qur'an that they are heretics following satan, who is drawing them toward the eternal punishment of Hell. They associate others with Him by valuing their ancestors' religion more than true Islam, and their own traditions more than the Qur'an. As a result, satan has used their ignorance, bigotry, pride and lack of intelligence to lead them astray. In other words, their own attitudes cause them to stray from the true path and adopt a distorted ancestral religion known to them as “Islam.”

This ancestral religion is very different from the Islam described in the Qur'an. For example, they pray when something is bothering them or when they feel they have exhausted all other possibilities; sometimes they even pray to receive worldly favors to satisfy their egos. Even though they may know what is actually said in the Qur'an about prayer, they do not really practice it. In fact, they do not give proper thanks to Allah, but only for something of importance to them. They do not have a correct view of the Qur'an and therefore ignore the countless blessings that Allah has given them and for which they must thank Him.

So, although they know that Allah exists, they ignore such verses as **“Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him”** (Surat an-Nisa': 36) and fall into the sin of association. They are so unaware of reality that they think that on the Day of Judgment, when everything will be revealed, Allah will accept their claim that they never committed such a grave sin:

On the Day We gather them all together, We will ask those who associated others with Allah: “Where are the partner-deities for whom you made such claims?” Then they will have no recourse but to say: “By Allah, our Lord, We were not idolaters.” See how they lie against themselves and how what they invented has forsaken them! (Surat al-An'am: 22-24)

... Turning toward Him. Fear (and respect) Him and perform (the obligatory) prayer. Do not be among the idolaters, those who split up their religion and form into sects, each faction exulting in what it has. (Surat ar-Rum: 31-32)

As these verses reveal, the fact that they happily accept the perversity of those idolaters who divide their religion into sects show just how unaware they really are. Although they know their errors and understand what is right, they refuse to accept the truth out of a strong desire to continue being guided by their own passions and desires.

Satan's Efforts to Drag Believers into Unawareness

One of satan's major goals is to divert people from the Way of Allah and lead them to Hell. He busies their minds with false apprehensions in an attempt to confuse them and prevent sound thought.

All sincere believers have an open mind and thus are aware of reality and can consider all of the details necessary to reach a sound decision. Their moral character, which is reflected in their behavior, comes from their faith, fear, and respect of Allah. But sometimes satan can take advantage of their momentary forgetfulness, carelessness, or lack of knowledge to draw them into unawareness.

Allah warns believers about this danger: **"Do not let satan bar your way. He truly is an outright enemy to you."** (Surat al-Zukhruf: 62) and **"Those who believe fight in the Way of Allah. Those who disbelieve fight in the way of false deities. So fight the friends of satan! Satan's scheming is always feeble"**(Surat an-Nisa': 76). He announces that satan's devious plans will not affect sincere believers. Satan knows this and, when he vows to lead people astray, does not include Allah's sincere servants:

He (satan) said: "By Your might, I will mislead all of them, except for Your chosen servants among them." (Surah Sad: 82-83)

Despite this knowledge, satan nevertheless tries to confuse their minds during times of difficulty, illness, or some other personal hardship, if only for a moment, to prevent them from earning an even greater reward and rising to an even higher place in Allah's Sight. For example, if someone is about to do a good deed, satan may insert thoughts about postponing it until later so that, hopefully, the person will forget all about it. Or, as we read in Surat an-Nisa' 95: **"Those believers who stay behind-other than those forced to by necessity-are not the same as those who strive in the Way of Allah, sacrificing their wealth and themselves. Allah has given those who strive with their wealth and themselves a higher rank than those who stay behind. Allah has promised the best to both, but has preferred those who strive over those who stay behind by an immense reward."** Satan wants to prevent believers from striving in His Way and from earning greater dignity in His Sight.

Satan makes intimations to believers during difficult times of sickness or in the heat of battle in order to take advantage of a momentary weakness.

Of course, Allah tests individuals with periods of difficulty, pressure, and distress so that they will reveal their true natures. Such testing is very important. For example, during the time of our Prophet (saas), some individuals who were constantly by his side on the battlefield became unaware in the heat of battle:

... when they came at you from above you and below you, when your eyes rolled and your hearts rose to your throats, and you thought unworthy thoughts about Allah. (Surat al-Ahzab: 10)

Allah gives the good news that sincere believers who fall into momentary unawareness will be forgiven if they repent. Repentance is thus one of His great gifts. In fact, He tells us in the Qur'an how He forgave three sincere believers who regretted their failure to fight:

And (He turned) also toward the three who were left behind, so that when Earth became narrow for them, for all its great breadth, and their own selves became constricted for them and they realized that there was no refuge from Allah except in Him, He turned to them so that they might turn to Him. Allah is the Ever-Returning, the Most Merciful. (Surat at-Tawba: 118)

Satan can whisper to people until they become immersed in despair, thinking that everything is lost and that the situation is irremediable. But believers know that such thoughts are no more than satanic deceptions, and so ignore them. They immediately turn to Allah, repent, and take refuge from unawareness in Him:

As for those who guard against evil, when they are bothered by suggestions from satan, they remember and immediately see clearly. (Surat al-A'raf: 201)

Taking refuge in Allah from the empty apprehensions that can lead them into unawareness, they are careful to remember Him at all times, read and ponder the Qur'an, and pray constantly. So, by His will, they are saved from even a moment of unawareness.

A warning to unaware people

... so that you may warn a people whose ancestors were not warned and who are therefore unaware. (Surah Ya Sin: 6)

Throughout history, Allah chose prophets and messengers, upon whom He bestowed light and understanding, to warn all people who, for whatever reason, had rejected or had lost their earlier awareness of true Islam. Allah chose our Prophet, Muhammad (saas), to warn his own people, to bring the true religion to them, and to instill in them fear and respect due to Allah:

Warn them of the Day of Bitter Regret, when the affair will be resolved. But they take no notice. They have no faith. (Surah Maryam: 39)

These prophets and messengers told their people about Allah, His infinite power, and the Hereafter; showed proofs on Earth and in the heavens of His existence; and, through various means, called their people to faith in Allah and obedience to Him. But most people, in spite of the wondrous order in all that they could see, did not appreciate His power properly and so continued to turn their backs on Him:

When Our Signs came to them in all their clarity, they exclaimed: "This is downright magic!" And they repudiated them wrongly and haughtily, despite their own certainty about them. See the final fate of the corrupters. (Surat an-Naml: 13-14)

Allah warns people in different ways. This book, a believer's words, a person's own conscience, or even an informative report in the press or some other publication can all serve to warn people. Everything a person sees and hears actually occurs through Allah's choosing and, if evaluated in the knowledge that they come from Him, can be understood as warnings to turn to Him. Allah has sent us various warnings and reminders, and in the Qur'an He commands us to correct their behaviors and find the right path.

CHARACTERISTICS OF UNAWARE INDIVIDUALS

Unaware individuals focus their attention on and pursue worldly desires and expectations as if they were in a trance. They direct all of their efforts toward achieving a higher rank or position and more possessions, and constantly imagine and talk about what they will do with the money they earn. They are so preoccupied with these things that they forget about Allah's commands and prohibitions. Unable to conceive of Allah's knowledge and power, they feel under no obligation to respect the limits He has established for humanity.

Remembering Allah stimulates the conscience of those who do not believe in the Hereafter and reminds them of their unawareness. But when they struggle with their egos as to whether they should fulfill their responsibilities to Him or not, they end up clinging to their unawareness. As a result, they feel great inner discomfort whenever Allah's name is mentioned:

When Allah, the One and Only, is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink back, shuddering. But when others apart from Him are mentioned, they jump for joy. (Surat az-Zumar: 45)

Now, let's examine the general character of these unaware individuals.

They do not remember Allah and the Hereafter and their hearts are filled with worldly ambitions.

Believers' morality is so deep and sincere that nothing prevents them from remembering Allah and observing the obligatory prayers:

(There are people who are) not distracted by trade or commerce from remembering Allah, performing prayer, and giving alms, fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be in turmoil. (Surat al-Nur: 37)

But, unlike believers, unaware individuals have their hearts set on this world's possessions. This makes them always want to have more and a better life, regardless of how they are currently living. They think money can buy them power and recognition and make them happy. First, they want to amass wealth, and then they want to store it and acquire even more. To make this appear legitimate, they make various excuses. By refusing to spend their money to earn Allah's pleasure, they amass wealth and think only about satisfying their worldly desires. Their fate is described in the Qur'an:

On the Day it is heated up in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads, sides, and backs are branded with it. (They are told): “This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you were hoarding!” (Surat at-Tawba: 35)

... who has amassed wealth and hoarded it! He thinks his wealth will make him live forever. No indeed! He will be flung into the Shatterer. (Surat al-Humaza: 2-4)

Blinded by their desire for worldly possessions, these people are unaware of the fate awaiting them. Having spent their lives obsessed with earning and spending money, they cannot remember Allah, perform their daily prayers, or give money to the poor. However, believers whose hearts are filled only with the desire to win His favor never forget that all of their possessions are no more than His gifts that are to be used to earn His pleasure. Believers, who think only of pleasing Allah and obtaining His mercy, work eagerly so that they may contribute to His religion. Since they cannot become caught up in any other passions, they will always remember Allah, approach Him in prayer, and understand that everything comes from and ultimately belongs to Him. As a result, they will regard their possessions as reminders to thank and praise Him.

Allah gives the example of Prophet Solomon (as) who, although he had great wealth, was neither distracted by it nor made it a focus of ambition; rather, he saw all of it as a reason to thank and praise Him:

When swift horses champing at the bit were displayed before him in the afternoon, he said: “Truly do I love the love of good, with a view to the glory of my Lord,” until the sun disappeared behind its veil. (Surah Sad: 31-32)

Until Prophet Solomon (as), Allah had never given anyone such power and wealth. He used these blessings to exalt Allah’s glory and proclaim His religion’s magnificence and honor. He always gave thanks to the true owner of his wealth and possessions.

Unaware people turn their backs on Allah, thinking that wealth, position, and fame can make them happy and content. They enjoy being among people who talk about these things, for in such an environment they can praise themselves and criticize others as well as spend hours watching useless and inane television talk shows:

(Unbelievers are) those whose eyes were blind to My remembrance and whose ears were unable to hear. (Surat al-Kahf: 101)

But believers are not content with possessing worldly goods or participating in useless conversations; rather, they are content only when praising and remembering Him and reading the Qur'an:

... those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Him can the heart find peace. (Surat an-Ra'd: 28)

Not using their intellects

In unbelieving societies, the phrase "lack of intelligence" denotes people with mental disabilities and those who behave in an abnormal manner. But in the Qur'an, this phrase refers to those individuals who reject Allah's existence and that of the Hereafter, who live only to satisfy their own egos. According to this definition, people who lack intelligence are not only found in mental hospitals, but also make up a part of society as a whole.

The mind is one of Allah's greatest gifts to humanity. Rational people always act according to their consciences; properly appreciate His knowledge and power; and love, fear, and respect Him. They do their best to please Him, to save themselves from Hell's eternal punishment, and are eager to attain the Hereafter's endless blessings. In addition, they ponder deeply on Allah's creation and appreciate His endless power and greatness. In other words they are believers. Those irrational individuals who do not have this ability are described in the Qur'an:

Have they not traveled throughout the land, and do they not have with which hearts to understand or ears with which to hear? It is not their eyes that are blind, but the hearts in their breasts that are blind. (Surat al-Hajj: 46)

The most distinguishing feature of these irrational people is their preference for the life of this world, to which they are so passionately devoted, over that of the Hereafter. And yet Allah warns such people to reflect on this world's true nature:

The life of this world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The Hereafter is better for those who guard against evil. So will you not use your intellect? (Surat al-An'am: 32)

Anything you have been given is only the enjoyment of the life of this world and its finery. What is with Allah is better and longer lasting. So will you not use your intellect? (Surat al-Qasas: 60)

We have sent down to you a Book containing a Reminder for you. So will you not use your intellect? (Surat al-Anbiya': 10)

The perfectly ordered systems and creatures that Allah has created, together with all that they teach us about reality, are beyond the vision of unaware people; they can only be appreciated by believers who use their intelligence. Intelligent, aware believers carefully observe everything in their vicinity and ponder deeply on what they see. In the Qur'an, Allah gives the examples of a mosquito, a honeybee, a spider, and many other creatures He has made to encourage people to think about and appreciate His knowledge, power, and artistry. However, only those believers with intelligence can know their qualities and understand the perfection of living things and their qualities based on what they produce. From these, they can appreciate His power and artistry.

As for unaware individuals, their irrationality causes them to imagine that the creatures they see around them every day are simple and ordinary. To them, a bee just buzzes around and lands on flowers, and a mosquito is just a blood-sucking pest:

The worst of beasts in Allah' sight are the deaf and dumb (people) who have no intellect. (Surat al-Anfal: 22)

Another important aspect of such people is that since they cannot discriminate between rationality and irrationality, they imagine that they are rational and that it is the rational people who are irrational:

When they are told: "Believe in the way that the people believe," they exclaim: "What! Are we to believe in the way that fools believe?" No indeed! They are the fools, but they do not know it. (Surat al-Baqara: 13)

They believe they are on the right path

Taking the general population as an example, the most salient characteristic of heedless individuals is their attempt to persuade themselves that their thoughts and actions are justified. Believing that they are not harming others and that their hearts are filled with goodness, they imagine that they deserve what they have. However, Allah says something rather different in the Qur'an:

Do they imagine that, in the wealth and children We extend to them, We are hastening to them with good things? No indeed, but they have no awareness! (Surat al-Mu'minun: 55-56)

It is revealed in the Qur'an that such people believe that they are on the right path, and so satan prevents them from obeying Allah's commands and prohibitions:

**They debar them from the path, yet they still think they are guided.
(Surat al-Zukhruf: 37)**

**But your Lord knows best who is best guided on the (right) Path.
(Surat al-Isra': 84)**

Allah gives an instructive example of the state of such individuals in the story of the vineyard owner. We are told in the Qur'an of a conversation between two people, only one of whom is aware:

Make an example for them of two men. To one of them We gave two gardens of grapevines and surrounded them with date palms, putting between them some cultivated land. Both gardens yielded their crops and did not suffer any loss, and We made a river flow right through the middle of them. (Surat al-Kahf: 32-33)

He entered his garden and wronged himself by saying: "I do not think that this will ever end. I do not think the Hour will ever come. But if I should be sent back to my Lord, I will definitely get something better in return." (Surat al-Kahf: 35-36)

His companion, with whom he was debating, asked: “Do you then not believe in Him Who created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm, and then formed you as a man? He is, however, Allah, my Lord, and I will not associate anyone with my Lord.” (His companion replied:) “Why, when you entered your garden, did you not say: ‘It is as Allah wills, there is no strength but in Him’? Though you see me with less wealth and children than you possess, it may well be that my Lord will give me something better than your garden and send down upon it a fireball from the sky so that the morning finds it a shifting heap of dust or finds its water drained into the ground so that you cannot get at it. (Surat al-Kahf: 37-41)

The fruits of his labor were completely destroyed, and he woke up wringing his hands in grief, for everything that he had spent on it was now a ruin, a ruin with all of its trellises fallen in. He exclaimed: “Oh, if only I had not associated anyone with my Lord!” There was no group to come to his aid, besides Allah, and he was not given any help. In that situation, the only protection is from Allah, the Real. He gives the best reward and the best outcome. (Surat al-Kahf: 42-44)

The vineyard owner was deceived into thinking that he was on the right path due to his great wealth and many children. His very words demonstrate his unawareness, for his overwhelming pride and arrogance made it impossible for him to conceive of Allah’s power: **“But if I should be sent back to my Lord, I will definitely get something better in return.”** His unawareness is so deep that he thinks he created his garden and therefore will keep it forever. In recompense for his attitude, all of a sudden Allah destroyed his treasured vineyard.

Although they are unaware, some individuals think that they are on the right path and do some good deeds. However, these are not done to gain Allah’s favor but out of custom and habit, or out of a desire to put on appearances or soothe their consciences, or to make someone feel grateful to them. In reality, such deeds may not be of any use in the Hereafter, because they are limited only to those actions that do not conflict with the person’s own interests. Unaware that they may not receive a reward for the deeds they did to curry other people’s favor rather than to please Allah, they feel certainly sure that they are on the right path.

These people regard their children, property, and easy and carefree life as signs that they are on the right path. The fact is, however, that Allah allots them a period of time to test them and, due to their actions, gives them no share in the Hereafter:

As for those who desire the life of this world and its finery, We will give them full payment in it for their actions. They will not be deprived here of their due. But such people will have nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire. What they achieved here will come to nothing. What they did will prove to be null and void. (Surah Hud: 15-16)

People who deceive themselves in this way gain nothing but a painful death in a state of unawareness and eternal suffering:

Do not let their wealth and their children impress you. Allah merely wants to punish them by them in this world, and for them to die while they are unbelievers. (Surat al-Tawba: 85)

Other characteristics

Such people overreact to events, do not trust Allah and behave rebelliously. But believers know that Allah controls everything and so trust Him completely, regardless of what trials He sends their way. When something happens, they remain as patient as they can, for they know that such things are no more than trials sent by Allah. Therefore, they are happy and joyful in the knowledge that He will reward their patience and trust:

We will test you with a certain amount of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth, life, and fruits. But give good news to the steadfast. (Surat al-Baqara: 155)

Remembering these glad tidings only makes them more determined to be patient when facing difficulties. Fully aware that their possessions, wealth, position, and rank are meant to test them, they do their best to thank Him and use them according to His will so that they may earn His pleasure:

Every self will taste death. We test you with both good and evil as a trial. And you will be returned to Us. (Surat al-Anbiya': 35)

Unaware people are ignorant of these facts; even if they know about them, they ignore them. Therefore, they react to events quite differently. For example, believers who know that their loss of material goods is a trial from Allah accept their fate with full trust in Him. However, the same situation will cause material and spiritual damage to those who are unaware. They will become dejected and, as this feeling grows, become more unbalanced and irritable until they lose their mental health. Being rejected by their circle of acquaintances and losing their luxuries will only make things worse; it might even bring some individuals to the brink of

suicide. As we can see, unaware people have no trust in Allah, are rebellious, and live their lives far removed from His will.

THE REASONS FOR UNAWARENESS

Not listening to one's conscience

The conscience is a guide that, by Allah's inspiration, always points to the right path:

And (I swear by) the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or a sense of duty. One who purifies it has succeeded; one who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 7-10)

Depravity is the desire to fulfill the ego's desires and passions even if it means doing what is forbidden or illegal. Allah constantly inspires, through one's conscience, a warning against depravity. Constantly obeying this voice cleanses and purifies people from sin and leads them to salvation and happiness. Those who follow their ego first fall into the depths of unawareness and then advance on the road to perdition:

And they repudiated them (Our Signs) wrongly and haughtily, despite their own certainty about them. (Surat an-Naml: 14)

The conscience constantly warns people against the ego's limitless desires and urges them to follow the right path. Unaware people do not heed this warning, thinking that it will make them unhappy because it conflicts with the desires of their egos. And so they try to silence this divine warning, not realizing that its source, Allah, is calling them to the true path of eternal happiness.

The unawareness into which people fall as a result of ignoring this voice grows worse as they indulge in so much immorality (e.g., limitless sin and wickedness) that the ensuing rebelliousness, sin, and depravity cause their egos to begin deteriorating. They are now so profoundly unaware that they want to live in this state of wickedness forever:

Yet humanity still wants to deny what is ahead of him, asking: "So when is the Day of Rising?" But when the eyesight is dazzled, the Moon is eclipsed, and the Sun and Moon are fused together, on that Day humanity will ask: "To where can I run?" No indeed! There will be no safe place. On that Day, the only resting place will be your Lord. (Surat al-Qiyama: 5-12)

People who do not listen to this divine voice are in a great fall, for the resulting unawareness, which has alienated them from Him, brings with it a level of suffering far beyond our imagination: the burning pit of Hell.

Ignoring destiny

Destiny means that, whether living or non-living, every thing's, condition and experiences are determined beforehand by Allah. This is true of every creature, from a tiny mosquito to an elephant; from a tiny new-born fish in the ocean and microscopic creatures in every part of the world to all living things in the vast universe.

Nobody can choose even one of their physical attributes (e.g, their complexion, eye color, or height) or their parents. Given that they cannot determine such basic things, how can they possibly determine the course of their own lives? As revealed in the Qur'an: **"We have created all things in due measure"** (Surat al-Qamar: 49)

Anyone who is aware of this should seek Allah's mercy and favor when they use their possessions and experience anything. In fact, the Qur'an is the only guide that shows people how to do this. No human being, whether a powerful businessman or a tribesman, and no other creature, whether an animal living in the depths of the oceans or an insect in a primeval forest, can alter or escape the fate determined for them by Allah:

You do not engage in any matter, recite any of the Qur'an, or do any action without Our witnessing you while you are occupied with it. Not even the smallest speck eludes your Lord, either on Earth or in heaven. Nor is there anything smaller than that, or larger than that, which is not in a Clear Book. (Surah Yunus: 61)

We are told in the Qur'an that every moment and experience through which a person passes is determined by destiny. Those who ignore the facts revealed in the Qur'an think that they live in this vast universe, among billions of other people, due to blind and unconscious chance. So, they regard themselves as creatures who are free to do whatever they want. Under the illusion that they are autonomous and independent of Allah, they plunge into deep unawareness.

Forgetting that death may come at any moment

People usually meet their death at unexpected times and places, for:

And no self knows what it will earn tomorrow and in what land it will die. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Surah Luqman: 34)

The moment of a person's death is determined by destiny even before he or she is born. Allah reveals in the Qur'an:

It is He Who created you from clay and then decreed a fixed term, and another fixed term is specified with Him. (Surat al-An'am: 2)

The fact that people do not know when they will die is one of the factors that draw them toward unawareness. If people who are aware of the Hereafter's punishments knew when they would die, they would not remain heedless of Allah's commands, be distracted by this world, or forget that they will be called to account in the Hereafter.

Not knowing the time of one's death is a secret of the trials of this world. Believers who know this prepare for the Hereafter as if they expect to die at any moment. They obey all of Allah's commands and prohibitions with complete sincerity for as long as they live.

Unaware people live according to the desires of their egos. They know they will die, but cannot grasp the fact that death is an awakening in the Hereafter either to eternal Paradise or endless Hell. They think of it as only an eternal separation from the things and people they loved. This is why they are so passionate about what and whom they love and so uncomfortable when the subject of death is mentioned or crosses their minds. Just thinking about it depresses them and makes them worry that their lives will change. Since they do not consider that death may be right around the corner and do not reflect on its reality, they ignore Allah's commands and prohibitions, or at least postpone thinking about them, by telling themselves that they still have a lot of time to pray and will start doing so when they are older. But they really have no idea how much time they have left. They go merrily on their way, only to find that death comes suddenly, before they start living in compliance with Allah's commandments. The moment the heedless people meet death, which they regard as remote and far off, is described in the Qur'an as follows:

If those who do not believe only knew of the time when they will not be able to keep the Fire away from their faces or their backs! And they will receive no help! No, it (death) will come upon them suddenly, confounding them, taking them completely by surprise, and they will not be able to ward it off. They will be granted no reprieve. (Surat al-Anbiya': 39-40)

From this verse, we can clearly see that death does not listen to excuses and that the appointed time approaches quickly. Nothing can prevent its coming. Allah tells this in the Qur'an:

Say: "Death, from which you are fleeing, will certainly catch up with you. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible, and He will inform you about what you did." (Surat al-Jumu'ah: 8)

A person may die at any moment; forgetting this fact or trying to escape it is a sign that a person is unaware and that he is being sucked into the whirlpool of unawareness. It is a certain fact that unawareness may lead to eternal suffering.

Not thinking about the account one will give

People who are unaware also forget that they will be called to account in Allah's sight in the Hereafter. No matter if they die alone or among many others, when the angel of death takes their souls, all of their relationships with the world and those around them are severed. When they are resurrected and go to give their accounts, each person is alone in the vast multitude, for no one will take any notice of anyone else. This solitude is not like any earthly isolation. The moment of reckoning will be the most difficult moment that an unaware person will ever face. The resulting solitude comes from the realization that it is now time to account for all that they have done, that they are completely isolated from other people, and that they are powerless in His presence. They are physically and emotionally exposed; bereft of their power, possessions, titles, position, and renown; and apart from all those to whom they were close. In other words, they are totally alone in Allah's presence:

Each of them will come to Him on the Day of Resurrection all alone. (Surah Maryam: 95)

Unaware people who do not see any immediate consequences for what they do here think that the same applies in the Hereafter. Due to this error, they persuade their friends to ignore Allah's commands and prohibitions or to put off their obedience until later, saying things like "you only live once," "don't worry about it," or "I'll take full responsibility for it." Such expressions clearly betray their lack of awareness, for just as a person comes into this world but once, he or she will also descend into Hell but once and suffer endless punishment there. Such people regard this punishment lightly and claim that they will take the sins of others upon

themselves. This shows even more how far away they are from understanding His supreme knowledge and power:

No burden-bearer can bear another's burden. If someone weighed down calls for help to bear his load, none of it will be borne for him, even by his next of kin. You can only warn those who fear (and respect) their Lord in the Unseen and perform prayer. Whoever is purified is purified for himself alone. Allah is your final destination. (Surah Fatir: 18)

(Has he not been informed) that no burden-bearer can bear another's burden? (Surat an-Najm: 38)

In the Hereafter, all people will receive a just and perfect recompense for their deeds. There will be no friends or relatives to take responsibility for their errors or help them out, as there were while they were alive. Indeed, they now begin to hate all of the friends they once respected, blaming them for making them unaware of these truths:

On that Day the closest friends will be enemies to each other-except for those who guard against evil. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 67)

... the Day when friends will be of no use at all to each other, and they will not be helped. (Surat ad-Dukhan: 41)

The false friendships of this world cease and actually turn into hostility in the Hereafter, for they were formed for some advantage and without regard for Allah's consent. While they were in the world, they made friends not with people who directed their hearts toward Allah and were loved by Him, but with insincere, unaware individuals who turned their backs on Him and denied His existence. Actually, it is quite common for the best of friends to become enemies when there is a conflict between that friendship and their own advantage. As we are told in the Qur'an, friendships that last a lifetime even though the parties harm one another by leading each other into unawareness will turn into hostility in Allah's presence. This hostility begins once they gradually begin to become aware of suffering as their veil of unawareness is lifted from them. Allah reveals their sincere confessions:

(They will say:) "And now we have no one to intercede for us." (The Companions of the Fire will say:) "We do not have a single loyal friend. If

only we could have another chance, then we would be among the believers!” (Surat ash-Shu‘ara’: 100-102)

When they are called to account, in deep sorrow, unbelievers express that they are all alone. The believers, with whom they made fun of while they were in the world are not around. When they come face to face with the truth they took so lightly, they long to return and be among the sincere believers:

It may be that those who are unbelievers will wish that they had been Muslims. (Surat al-Hijr: 2)

But there is now no way back.

FREEING ONESELF FROM UNAWARENESS

Reading the Qur’an and pondering its verses

The most effective solution to ending one’s unawareness is to read the Qur’an, Allah’s divine light to guide His servants, and reflect upon its verses. Reading the Qur’an draws people closer to Allah and allows them to grasp something of His supreme knowledge and power. At the same time, it provides the clearest and truest knowledge about what was previously unknown and unconsidered, and also answers questions that had perplexed them in the past. For this reason, those who read the Qur’an sincerely understand it turn to Allah with their hearts satisfied.

Those who take its verses to heart become aware of the errors in their attitudes and ideas. Gradually, they come to understand the importance and seriousness of their past deeds and what drove them to engage in such activities. In short, they finally begin to understand Allah’s supreme knowledge and power, and thus feel their fear, respect, and love for Him start to grow:

This (Qur’an) is a communication to be transmitted to humanity so that people may be warned by it and will know that He is Allah, the One and Only; and so that people of intelligence will pay heed. (Surah Ibrahim: 52)

This Qur’an guides to the most upright Way and gives good news to the believers who do right actions that they will have a large reward. (Surat al-Isra’: 9)

Those who read the Qur'an and ponder its verses with sincerity eventually come to see it in the context of its manifestations of Allah. This allows them to remember Him at all times and avoid any type of unawareness. For example, they gradually notice that some of the people around them have characteristics that the Qur'an says belong to deniers. And, due to their awareness of the punishment awaiting such people, these examples become important lessons for them. This way, by Allah's will, they avoid unawareness and learn how to protect themselves from it. In addition, they realize that the verses in the Qur'an reveal the punishment of Hell and that, apart from Allah's will, there is no salvation. In the same way, they ponder the eternal beauty and blessings of life in the Garden and strive to win His mercy so that they may enter the Garden. Those who read the Qur'an know that they will be called to account for what they have done and, based on this record, will enter the Garden or Hell. Therefore, aware of this truth, they avoid any type of unawareness and are careful to act in ways that win His approval.

Taking advantage of the opportunities sent by Allah

Allah has created circumstances that enable human beings to recognize His existence and turn to Him. Among these are times of anxiety and difficulty: **Do they not see that they are tried once or twice in every year? But still they do not turn back. They do not pay heed** (Surat at-Tawba:126). These difficult periods are very useful in causing people to realize their unawareness, for, in such moments, the lower self, which is in a constant state of rebelliousness against Allah, realizes its helplessness. During these times, people bring their consciences to the fore, see their errors, and find ways to avoid them. This important opportunity, provided people act upon it properly, helps them curtail their lower selves by recognizing their own weakness and repenting of their sins. As a result, they feel closer to Allah. They realize that Allah's power is all-sufficient, that He is the source of all things, and that only He can end this period of testing.

It is He Who conveys you on both land and sea, so that when some of you are on a boat, running before a fair wind, rejoicing at it, and then a violent squall comes upon them and the waves come at them from every side and they realize there is no way of escape, they call upon Allah, making their religion sincerely His: "If You rescue us from this, we will truly be among the thankful." But then, when He rescues them, they become rebellious in the land without any right to do so. O humanity, your rebelliousness is only against yourselves. There is the enjoyment of the life of this world, and then you will return to Us and We will inform you about what you did. (Surah Yunus: 22-23)

Unaware people can realize that there is no power to help them except Allah only when they feel completely helpless. But when their difficulties end, they forget Him and carry on as before:

When harm touches humanity, he calls upon Us, lying on his side, sitting down, or standing up. Then when We remove the harm from him, he carries on as if he had never called upon Us when the harm first touched him. In that way, We make what they have done appear good to the profligate. (Surah Yunus: 12)

For example, in times of natural disaster, people recognize how powerless they really are, that His knowledge and might are infinite, and that Allah is omnipresent and omniscient. At these times, they are reminded that they should fear and respect Him because He is all-powerful and that they may suffer His wrath at any moment. But earlier, these same people had ignored His commands and prohibitions, putting off their obedience until later. When fear consumes them, their consciences become clear and they recognize the truth. By causing people to see the truth, natural disasters are excellent reminders that, if understood in the proper light, will save them in the Hereafter. But once their discomfort fades, those who do not learn from such warnings allow their traditional unawareness to reassert itself, embrace this transitory world again, and resume their defiance of His commands and prohibitions. In order to escape from this vicious circle, individuals should take advantage of these opportunities by frequently recalling their difficulties and how Allah comforted them.

They must understand that these events are warnings, and thus great blessings, for such displays of Allah's infinite power open the way for people to cast off their usual unawareness. However, it is wrong to wait for such events to happen in order to escape from unawareness, because Allah gives such warnings all the time: difficult times experienced by relatives and neighbors, natural disasters, wars, and so on. Those individuals who heed these warnings realize that the same thing could happen to them. Using such events to remind themselves just how powerless they really are when confronted with Allah's supreme might, they try to root out their own unawareness and turn to Him. What happened to the people of 'Ad could happen to any people:

(The people of) 'Ad were destroyed by a savage howling wind. Allah subjected them to it for seven nights and eight days without a break. You could see the people flattened in their homes, just like the hollow stumps of uprooted palms. (Surat al-Haqqah: 6-7)

By giving such examples in the Qur'an, Allah expects people to learn from what has happened to others and to think about His infinite power and knowledge. Daily life contains many examples that lead people to remember Allah's power. But people merely feel sorry and pity when they see powerless individuals; they do not realize that what they see is also a warning to them. All of these examples are warnings and new opportunities for people to pierce the veil of unawareness.

Knowing that Allah is Omnipotent and Omnipresent

With the verse **“Does humanity reckon that he will be left to go on unchecked?”** (Surat al-Qiyama: 36), Allah tells human beings that they are always under His control. But unaware people are far from thinking and grasping this fact. However, only a moment of sincere contemplation will suffice to think what life would be if man had to accomplish and control everything by himself.

For example, right now we are unaware of all the things happening in our bodies and feel no need to take an interest in them. And yet our organs continue to function in constant harmony with each other. As far as we are concerned, our first priority is having a constant supply of oxygen to sustain our lives. Of course, we have other priorities as well, such as controlling our heart's beating, maintaining our blood circulation, keeping the acidity in our stomach balanced, digestion, and countless other functions.

Imagine the impossible, that we controlled all of our bodily functions. For example, who controls these functions when we are asleep, for they never stop. If our heart slipped out of control for just a few minutes, it would stop beating and we would die. But it is also true that we need to sleep. And this is not all we would have to do if left on our own. For example, we would have to ensure the external conditions needed to sustain our lives.

Clearly, since we cannot control our own bodies, it requires a great deal of imagination to think that we could possibly have any influence on the countless delicately adjusted and balanced systems underlying the world and the universe. When we consider this and see that we cannot control anything, we realize that Allah controls all things with His supreme knowledge and power. We understand that He has created and controls all that exists, both animate and inanimate. But to reach this level of knowledge, we must defeat our lack of awareness by always being aware that Allah sees us and act accordingly. He is always observing us, creating our actions and us. In fact, there is no moment when He does not encompass us: **“Surely your Lord encompasses the people with His knowledge”** (Surat al-Isra': 60). Believers who know that Allah encompasses them know that He is aware of all that they do, say, and think, both openly and in secret, for He is omnipresent and omniscient:

Do you not see that Allah knows what is in the heavens and on the ground? Three men cannot confer together secretly without Him being the fourth, or five without Him being the sixth, or fewer or more than that without Him being with them wherever they are. Then He will inform them on the Day of Resurrection of what they did. Allah has knowledge of all things. (Surat al-Mujadala: 7)

An honest consideration of this clear truth is enough to root out one's unawareness, for it enables them to perceive the truth and live a good life in both worlds. Knowing that they are always under His sovereign power, they will fear and respect Him and avoid doing anything that would earn His wrath. In addition, they will know that Allah sees all of their good and fine actions and they will be joyful for the day when He rewards them. Understanding that everything happens in accordance with the trials He has predestined for them for their own good, they remain patient. As a result, they will attain the Garden He has promised to all believers.

Having intimate knowledge of the things Allah has created

Knowledge is one of the most effective ways to escape heedlessness. Examining, seeing and grasping the evidences of creation that pervade the universe undermines unawareness and keeps it at bay. Allah's superior might and knowledge can only justly be appreciated through such a serious endeavor and contemplation. Allah informs us that the universe and everything in it are created for a special purpose:

We did not create heaven and Earth and everything in between them as a game. (Surat al-Anbiya': 16)

Indeed, all created things are evidences of Allah's existence. Obtaining detailed knowledge about them allows people to see the manifestations of a supreme intelligence in every detail. Even a cursory observation of these details reveals that all that exists is composed of wonderful systems. Confronted with these details, people may clearly perceive Allah's existence and become aware of His superior power. By sincere thought and reflection, they manage to pierce the veil of unawareness that had blinded them and rendered their consciences mute.

For example, people can see Allah's supreme artistry and knowledge just by studying their own bodies and creation. Indeed, the creation of human itself is made of a chain of events that disperse unawareness. By multiplying a genetic code within a single cell, an embryo comes into being equipped with perfectly

functioning systems. This is a major proof in itself of His existence, power, and superior intelligence. Eggs and sperm, produced in separate individuals, come together during conception; one type of cell multiplies and differentiates to form bones, muscles, organs, eyes, hands, and feet with all their complex functions. Later on, this organism separates from the mother's womb and, after birth, sees, talks, walks, laughs, cries, and feels.

Thanks to modern investigative techniques, we can see into the far expanses of the universe and the depths of the oceans. To obtain detailed information on these remote places' inhabitants and events is becoming easier all the time. So, everyone who thinks and has detailed knowledge about the miracles of creation in these creatures and occurrences can sincerely say, **"...O Lord, you have not created this for nothing. Glory be to you. So safeguard us from the punishment of fire"** (Surah Al 'Imran: 191), will be rescued from unawareness.

In the face of these evident evidences, those who are saved from heedlessness attain the kind of faith based on certainty, come to know His supreme attributes, draw nearer to Him and seek to win His favor in all his actions.

Knowing that this world's life is short and temporary

This life will one day end and people will enter the Hereafter, where they will live forever. However, people who do not realize that this life is transitory and short are passionately bound to it and live only for this world. From childhood on, they continually make plans for the future and try to fulfill their desires. In the midst of this distraction, they suddenly die, never having understood the true nature of life or this world. What they see as permanent will come to an end like a fleeting dream; but in the Hereafter, they will understand that this life lasts as long as a dream and that they were sadly mistaken. Allah reveals the conversations of those in the Hereafter:

He (Allah) will ask: "How many years did you tarry on Earth?" They will say: "We tarried there for a day or part of a day. Ask those able to count." He will reply: "You only tarried there for a little while, if you did but know!" (Surat al-Mu'minun: 112-14)

The expression “a day or a part of a day” shows how short a person’s life, which seems so long, really is. This is a truth known in the Sight of Allah, so human beings must carefully consider why they choose a certain path. Will they be satisfied with the endless Garden or the life of this world, which is very short? The core issue here is that the benefits of this life are very short, in exact proportion to its brief span.

Therefore, people should think of this world as a waiting room for the real world in the Hereafter. Of course, people do not pay much attention to the furnishings or events that occur in a waiting room, for they do not intend to stay there very long. Nor do they consider such things when making their plans, for whatever goes on in there is of no use to them. In the same way, nothing done for the sake of the world is of any use in the Hereafter. In other words, all such deeds will eventually disappear, just like a mirage:

But the actions of those who do not believe are like a mirage in the desert. A thirsty man thinks it is water. But when he reaches it, he finds it to be nothing at all; rather, he finds Allah there. He will pay him his account in full. Allah is swift at reckoning. (Surat an-Nur: 39)

As the above verse makes clear, everything done for the sake of this world will one day disappear, and individuals will give an account in His presence only of what they did to gain His favor. At that moment when they are confronted with His punishment, they will realize their errors and have a sense of endless sorrow and helplessness. When their unawareness finally ends and they realize the whole truth, they will want to return to this earthly life and live in accordance with His commands and prohibitions. But it will be too late:

They will shout out in it: “Our Lord, take us out! We will act rightly, differently from the way we used to act!” Did We not let you live long enough for anyone who was going to pay heed to do so? And did not the warner come to you? So taste it! There is no helper for the wrongdoers. (Surah Fatir: 37)

If only you could see the evildoers hanging their heads in shame before their Lord: “Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so send us back again and we will act rightly. Truly we now have certainty.” (Surat as-Sajda: 12)

Before each person is brought alone into His presence, he or she should understand and consider just how short and transitory this present life is. This

awareness will cause them to avoid useless efforts, free themselves from their current level of unawareness, and make the best possible use of their time here.

Thinking about death

Each person has been allotted a specific amount of time in this world, after which he or she will die:

Say: “Death, from which you are fleeing, will certainly catch up with you. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the Visible, and He will inform you about what you did.” (Surat al-Jumu’ah: 8)

Death comes to all people, even to those who fear it and avoid thinking about it. But the moment of death will be different for those who have ignored Allah’s decrees and those who have not. Deniers will come face to face with death when they least expect it, and thus will be overcome with fear and horror. Moreover, their lives will be taken amidst great suffering:

How will it be when the angels take them in death, beating their faces and their backs? (Surah Muhammad: 27)

At that moment, they will see the meaninglessness of their worldly ambitions and the things they put above Allah’s commands and prohibitions. Everything they valued—families, relatives, jobs, cars, and all their other possessions—will become as nothing. Completely helpless and alone, their fear of what is to come will grow. Only now realizing that their lives have been for nothing, they will be sorry that that they did nothing to earn His favor. In their fear and sorrow, they will try to escape the coming punishment, even to the point of sacrificing everything they love:

(On the Day of Judgment) no good friend will ask about his friend, even though they can see each other. An evildoer will wish he could ransom himself from the punishment of that Day by means of his sons, his wife, his brother, his family who sheltered him, or by everyone else on Earth, if that only meant he could save himself. But no! It is a Raging Blaze. (Surat al-Ma’arij: 10-15)

These verses clearly state that people will give up their own lives, as well as those of everyone else who ever meant anything to them, and all the worldly possessions to which they had been so passionately attached in a vain attempt to avoid Hell. But nobody and nothing will be of any use; they will not be able to save themselves from joining the people of Hell.

While the lives of unbelievers are taken in suffering, the lives of believers are taken with ease. At the moment of death, the angels take the soul of such a person in a beautiful manner and carry it to the Garden:

(Those who guard against evil are) those the angels take in a virtuous state. They say: "Peace be upon you! Enter the Garden for what you did." (Surat an-Nahl: 32)

At that moment, believers want to tell those still in the world about the blessings Allah has bestowed upon themselves:

He (a believer) was told: "Enter the Garden." He said: "If my people only knew how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored ones." (Surah Ya Sin: 26-27)

Those who wish to attain this goal should consider what will happen to them if death finds them during a moment of unawareness. Knowing that the eternal punishment waiting for them will be many times more intense than any pain they have ever known or can imagine, they should sincerely turn to Allah and do their best to remove any potential unawareness.

Knowing that one's true abode is the Hereafter

Unaware people who do not realize that their true abode is the Hereafter are always searching for places and possessions that they believe will make them happier. For example, low-income people who pay rent dream of owning a house. To achieve this goal, they live in anxiety and spend most of their lives paying for a house and other needs by installments. Another person wants to move from an apartment into a detached house, and another one wants to own a farm with lots of land. Either because such people do not believe Allah's promise of property in the Hereafter or because the promise seems quite remote, they do not make the slightest effort to obtain it.

However, believers work hard to attain Paradise and its blessings. Allah warns those who compete with others to obtain worldly blessings in a heedless manner:

Race each other to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden as wide as the heavens and Earth, prepared for the people who guard against evil. (Surah Al 'Imran: 133)

Race each other to forgiveness from your Lord and to a Garden, whose breadth is like that of heaven and Earth combined, made ready for

those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. That is Allah's favor, which He gives to those whom He wills. His favor is indeed immense. (Surat al-Hadid: 21)

One common characteristic of those who cannot conceive of the Hereafter and those who are unaware is that their worldly position and possessions can never satisfy them. They have a passion for these things, even though all of these supposedly valuable things do not bring happiness or save them from pain and sorrow. Every worldly possession grows old, decays, and is eventually destroyed, even one's own body. For this reason, they always worry that what they value will be damaged or stolen. Allah warns them that such things will last only for a very short time and will not benefit them:

(The believer said:) "O my people, the life of this world is only fleeting enjoyment. The Hereafter is the abode of permanence." (Surah Ghafir: 39)

To men, the love of worldly appetites is painted in glowing colors: women and children, heaped-up mounds of gold and silver, horses with fine markings, and livestock and fertile farmland. All that is merely the enjoyment of the life of this world. The best homecoming is in the presence of Allah. (Surah Al 'Imran: 14)

Awareness of this world's fleeting nature may rescue people from their unawareness by ending their passion for its temporary blessings and directing them toward Paradise's endless blessings and seeking His favor:

The truly good will be in perfect Bliss on couches gazing in wonder. You will recognize in their faces the radiance of delight. They are given the choicest sealed wine to drink, whose seal is musk. Let people with aspiration aspire to that! (Surat al-Mutaffifin: 22-26)

Knowing that there is no return from the Hereafter

Unaware people deceive themselves by thinking that they will have another opportunity through reincarnation. They think that no matter what errors they have made, they will be reborn so that they can take care of them:

If only you could see the evildoers hanging their heads in shame before their Lord: "Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so send us back

again and we will act rightly. Truly we now have certainty.” (Surat as-Sajda: 12)

One reason why we are told in the Qur’an about this is so that people will know beforehand that there is no return from that day; and that they should not become caught up in baseless apprehensions, but seek Allah’s favor. Allah warns people who do not think about the punishment waiting for them or who doubt its reality, and those whose faith is not based on sure knowledge, that they will eventually encounter these truths in His presence. For those who remain profoundly unaware due to their stubborn refusal to understand this, imagining that they will be given another opportunity is nothing more than self-deception.

People who deserve to be punished will give vent to their sorrow and regret on the Day of Judgment:

When he sees the punishment, (he says): “If only I could have another chance so that I could be a good-doer!” (Surat az-Zumar: 58)

In order to avoid unawareness and having to express such sorrows, people should think carefully and fear His wrath. The greatest error of those who deserve punishment is that they compare the Hereafter with this earthly life; and His interrogation, Paradise, and Hell with their experiences in this world. They deceive themselves by thinking that they can make up for every error in the Hereafter, just as they did in this world. For example, if they fail a course at school or are expelled, there is the possibility that they can redeem themselves in the future. Prisoners think that their sentences will eventually be served, after which they will be released. Indeed, this world’s troubles do not last for ever; they eventually end one day. Believing that they will also have such opportunities in the Hereafter, heedless people transgress the limits He has established for humanity. But they fail to realize the falsity of this comparison, for such opportunities to make restitution only exist in this world. The Hereafter is the place where rewards, both positive and negative, are given. In order to avoid the unawareness that will bring eternal punishment in its wake, people must realize that they will not return from the Hereafter and that they can repent and reform themselves only in this world.

Knowing that Hell’s punishment will last forever

In just the same way as they regard death, unaware people also regard Paradise and Hell as remote. However, both Paradise and Hell are as certain as death. In those two locations, things have more clarity and truth than they have here. Moreover, everyone will end up in one of them and remain there forever.

When people ponder the truth that Hell is certain, their fear of and respect for Allah and longing for Paradise grows. Allah describes Hell as a place full of punishment:

That Day you will see the evildoers yoked together in chains, wearing shirts of tar, their faces enveloped in the Fire. (Surah Ibrahim: 49-50)

... We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire whose billowing walls of smoke will hem them in. If they call out for help, they will be helped with water like seething molten brass, frying their faces. What a noxious drink! What an evil repose! (Surat al-Kahf: 29)

... Those who do not believe will have garments of fire cut out for them and boiling water poured over their heads, which will melt the contents of their bellies as well as their skin. They will be beaten with cudgels made of iron. Every time they want to come out of it because of their suffering, they will be driven back into it: "Taste the punishment of the Burning!" (Surat al-Hajj: 19-22)

The Fire will sear their faces, making them grimace horribly in it, their lips drawn back from their teeth. (Surat al-Mu'minun: 104)

When it (the Blaze) sees them coming from a long way off, they will hear it seething and rasping. When they are flung into a narrow place in it, shackled together in chains, they will cry out there for destruction. "Do not cry out today for just one destruction, (but) cry out for many destructions!" Say: "Is that better, or the Garden of Eternal Life that was promised to those who guard against evil? That is their recompense and destination." (Surat al-Furqan: 12-15)

Some people cannot endure the slightest pain in this world; but if they honestly think about what awaits them in Hell, they will see that that particular punishment cannot be compared with any pain in this world. In Hell, moreover, there is no death to end the endless punishment:

They will want to get out of the Fire, but they will not be able to. They will have an everlasting punishment. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 37)

No indeed! Those who accumulate bad actions and are surrounded by their mistakes, such people are the Companions of the Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever. (Surat al-Baqara: 81)

It is a fact that this punishment is truly enormous and without end. There is no escape from its eternal agony, and no one becomes immune to or accustomed to it. If people honestly consider this, their fear of and respect for Allah, as well as their level of awareness, will increase. In this way, they will be able to defeat their unawareness and seek His favor.

Understanding eternity

Some people are lazy when it comes to thinking about eternity. They do not try to understand it as an endless expanse of time that can never end, but only as a period of many years or centuries.

However, eternity is something quite different. It is not equivalent to the life of a person or a generation; nor is it a period of a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million, or even a trillion years. It is completely beyond these; it is time that never ends.

Those who accept this fact never risk the danger of spending eternity in Hell, where they would have to endure an eternal punishment that they could not bear for even one moment in this world. Therefore, thinking about eternity rouses people from their unawareness, brings them to their senses, and causes them to behave in ways pleasing to Allah. Believers who fear eternal life in Hell also realize that they have the possibility of living among the eternal blessings of the Garden. As a result, they never choose this world's transitory life over the endless life in the Hereafter.

Knowing the beauties of Paradise

Paradise is the reward for doing good works in this world, fearing and respecting Allah, and seeking His favor. In the Qur'an, Allah promises:

But as for those who believe and do right actions, We will admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever and ever. Allah's promise is true. Whose speech could be truer than His? (Surat an-Nisa': 122)

It is wrong to think of Paradise only as a place with beautiful gardens. Above all, it is a place where human beings are newly and beautifully re-created and live among endless blessings, where all of one's senses are sharper, and where everything gives greater pleasure. This world's transient pleasures are eternal in Paradise. Allah created these blessings as shadows of what is to come. Even though there are similarities between both sets of blessings, the blessings of Paradise are far superior and unending. In addition, there are no physical imperfections in Paradise. Everyone will have a beautiful form and will not sweat, smell bad, have

the need to use the toilet, or become sick. They will eat only for pleasure, not because they are hungry or their body needs food, and will not have to work for these blessings. Paradise contains things that are beyond all desire or imagination, as well as every kind of entertainment, splendid architecture, and amazing technology. Naturally, all of this is displayed in a flawlessly perfect order.

Every desirable activity that is deficient in the world, especially people's observance of Qur'anic morality, will be complete in Paradise. There will be no backbiting, false accusations, malicious criticism, cursing, lying, hypocrisy, envy, arrogance, disloyalty, or resentment; rather, there will be only peace, well-being, and Allah's favor:

They will enter Gardens of Eden, where they will be adorned with gold bracelets and pearls, and where their clothing will be of silk. (Surah Fatir: 33)

The Companions of the Garden are busy enjoying themselves today. They and their wives are reclining on couches in the shade. They will have fruits there and whatever they request. "Peace!" A word from a Merciful Lord. (Surah Ya Sin: 55-58)

In Gardens of Delight on couches face to face, (believers will have) a cup from a flowing spring passing round among them, as white as pure snow, delicious to those who drink, which has no headache in it and does not leave them stupefied. There will be dark-eyed maidens with them, with eyes reserved for them alone, just like closely guarded pearls. (Surat as-Saffat: 43-49)

Platters and cups of gold will be passed around among them, and they will have all that their hearts desire and in which their eyes take delight. You will remain in it timelessly, forever. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 71)

As we see from these verses, Paradise is the eternal land of peace where everything is of such an exalted level of beauty that it surpasses human imagination and desire. However, it is clearly stated in the Qur'an that Paradise has been prepared only for those who believe and do good works:

But as for those who believe and do right actions, We will admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever and ever. In them they will have spouses of perfect

purity, and We will admit them into cool, refreshing shade. (Surat an-Nisa': 57)

As for those who believe and do right actions and humble themselves before their Lord, they are the Companions of the Garden, remaining in it timelessly, forever. (Surah Hud: 23)

Pondering these descriptions is a very effective way of dispelling unawareness and destroying worldly ambition. An honest and serious consideration is enough for people to understand that nothing on Earth can compare with the excellence of Paradise. If they understand this, they will desire and long for Paradise and work to be worthy of it by adhering to Allah's commands and prohibitions.

THE END OF UNAWARENESS

Despite all of Allah's warnings, unawareness quickly draws those who persist in it toward a horrible, indescribable, and eternal punishment. Allah created this world as a place of testing, and those who leave it without becoming aware will continue their lives eternally among the people of Hell.

As revealed in the Qur'an, their eyes and ears have been sealed and their understanding removed. Their understanding and awareness are like those of animals. And, because they are so by choice, they are even lower than animals:

We created many of the jinn and humanity for Hell. They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf: 179)

Do you suppose that most of them hear or understand? They are just like cattle. Indeed, they are even further astray! (Surat al-Furqan: 44)

Animals have no awareness. Allah compares unaware people to them, because their animal-like unawareness has caused their hearts to harden. Whatever they see and hear, and all of the admonitions and advice they receive, do not lift them out of that state. As a result, they do not learn anything from what happens to them.

All people without exception are responsible for understanding and living according to the truth. But if they persist in their unawareness, they become less intelligent than other living species and lose those qualities that make them human. The sense, perception, and understanding that Allah gives to everyone so that they can know of His existence and serve Him are closed to these people who are determined to persist in unawareness:

Those are the people whose hearts, hearing, and sight have been sealed up by Allah. They are the unaware. (Surat an-Nahl: 108)

Such individuals can no longer save themselves from living among the people of Hell unless they turn towards Him. Their lack of awareness and confusion will be even greater in Hell:

Those who are blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter and even further off the Path. (Surat al-Isra': 72)

The harshness of the punishment and its terror are described in verses as follows:

... the kindled Fire of Allah reaching right into the heart. It is sealed in above them in towering columns. (Surat al-Humaza: 6-9)

People who live in a state of unawareness, who make no effort to escape from this state, and who die without being aware of the Qur'an and His pleasure will be dragged down to Hell.

CONCLUSION

As we have said throughout this book, being caught up in unawareness is one of the main factors that lead people to destruction. Unaware people may think that everything is going well and that they are living a comfortable life. The surest sign of this is their misguided idea that they know everything and do everything correctly. However, their unawareness will end in Allah's presence in the Hereafter:

(On the Day of Threat, they will be told:) "You were heedless of this, so We have stripped you of your covering and today your sight is sharp." (Surah Qaf: 22)

Now they will begin to clearly see the truths that they always ignored and refused to believe while alive. They will encounter the punishment that the believers had told them about but to which they never paid any attention. On that day, they will want to be destroyed or return to the world so that they can try to win His pleasure. But the time for such rethinking is now past; there is no place for them except among the people of Hell in eternal punishment:

But when the eyesight is dazzled, the Moon is eclipsed, and the Sun and Moon are fused together, on that Day humanity will ask: "To where can I run?" No indeed! There will be no safe place. On that Day, the only resting place will be your Lord. (Surat al-Qiyama: 7-12)

All people who die in a state of unawareness will experience great fear, sorrow, and helplessness on the Day of Judgment. The only way to avoid such an end is to honestly examine their lives, reject the unawareness that places them below animals, obey the Qur'an, remember Him at all times, and turn to Him in complete sincerity.

It is a great mistake to refuse to recognize one's unawareness, thinking that he or she can never fall into such a trap. This illusory belief only makes one more vulnerable to succumbing to this blindness, for satan misses no opportunity to escort someone to Hell:

Among people, there is one who argues about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious satan. It is written of him that if anyone takes him as a friend, he will mislead him and guide him to the punishment of the Searing Blaze. (Surat al-Hajj: 3-4)

Clearly satan uses unawareness, without any regard for conditions or surroundings, to tempt everyone to follow their egos' desires. But this unawareness stalks only those who are content to live in such a state. Individuals of good conscience, who are not content to remain unaware and be friends of satan, always have a way out: always remembering and turning to Him, fearing and respecting Him, and seeking His favor at all times. These dispel unawareness and raise people to an elevated level of awareness, wisdom, and faith. And this, no matter how much satan denies it, is the best, most comfortable, and surest way to attain eternal happiness. So, it is never too late to turn to Allah in true sincerity and hope for His mercy:

Your Lord knows best what is in your selves. If you are righteous, He is Ever-Forgiving to the remorseful. (Surat al-Isra': 25)

**They said, "Glory be to You!
We have no knowledge except what You have taught us.
You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."
(Surat al-Baqara: 32)**

Some individuals, unaware of Allah's clear commands and prohibitions in the Qur'an, live their lives according to their own whims and desires. But life is short and will one day end, along with everything else. At that moment, they will be confronted with the punishment of Hell that has been prepared for all those who did not seek to please Him while living in this temporary world.

In the Qur'an, Allah defines unawareness as a lack of awareness and careless attitude regarding the clear evidences of His existence and the evidence of His commands and prohibitions. Unawareness is a great danger for those who are heedless and do not submit to Allah sincerely, because those who are being drawn into unawareness, or who are already unaware, do not understand their situation properly. And even if they are aware of this danger, they do not care. Therefore, read this book in the knowledge that some degree of unawareness might exist within you and then do your best to overcome it. As Allah states in the

Qur'an: "No indeed! Truly humanity is unbridled, seeing himself as self-sufficient"

(Surat al-'Alaq: 6-7).

This book describes unawareness according to the Qur'an and warns people against its subtle danger.