

FORGETFULNESS

By Shehu Adam

What would it be like if God created the human being without the trait of forgetfulness? I think that, for myself in particular, the opportunity of coming to this earth through my mother would have been missed. I happen to be the third child born to her and she confessed to me that, "Had God created humans never to forget, no woman would have given birth to a second child." To put this differently, it is a blessing from God that many pains during certain experiences in our lives, such as childbirth, are mercifully forgotten, allowing their repetition when necessary.

What else does forgetfulness entail? Is it always good to be forgetful? The answer, of course, is that forgetfulness can have severe, negative side effects. For example, Adam forgot God's commandments and allowed Satan to dupe him into disobeying his Creator by approaching the one forbidden tree in the garden. The same holds true for us as Adam's descendants. We often forget and break God's commandments by lying, cheating, gossiping, backbiting, and worst of all committing shirk, or idol worship. We commit this mother of all crimes, despite all the verses with reminders in the scripture, such as this one found in Sura 39:65, *"It has been revealed to you, and to those before you that if you ever commit idol worship, all your works will be nullified, and you will be with the losers."*

Despite the knowledge and wisdom given to most of us, we forget that God is the only One who controls everything. This causes us to think that people possess the power to harm or benefit us. We forget the lesson of Joseph when he depended on a human to relieve his hardship, rather than God. Our Creator teaches this in Sura 12:42, *"He then said to the one to be saved, 'Remember me at your lord.'" Thus, the devil caused him to forget his Lord, and consequently he remained in prison a few more years."* It is a shame that we cannot see our enemy Satan as he constantly waits for every opportunity of our forgetfulness to lure us, and make us disobey the Most Gracious.

We often find ourselves afraid to remind our friends if they forget and break God's commandments because we do not want to hurt their feelings. With this type of attitude, we may find ourselves in a worse situation than our friends. This is to say that if family members (submitters), for example, backbite each other in front of us, and we are afraid to tell them they are breaking God's commandments because we want to be nice, we could end up committing a more serious crime than just participating in the backbiting with them. This can be shown with simple psychology. When people say, "We want to be nice," in situations where a reminder should be given, they are only making up an excuse. This excuse of being nice and not wanting to offend or hurt people by reminding them to stop this behavior, is not the complete truth. Attempting to avoid the "hurting of feelings" is not the real reason they don't remind people with the truth. The actual reason that we do not want the backbiters to become offended, or hurt, is because they may cause some hurt to us in return. Therefore, we are protecting our own feelings in disguise. This is what we shall term a civilized form of idol worship. We have fallen into the same trap as Joseph which God warned us about in the Quran. Satan made us forget and think that someone, other than God, had power to hurt, or make us feel bad. We forget the fact that God is the only one that controls our happiness, or misery. God proclaims this in Sura 53:43, *"He is the One who makes **you** laugh or cry."*

God created us and knows our weakness of forgetfulness. This is why He tells us in Sura 33:41-

42, "O **you** who believe, you shall remember God frequently. You shall glorify Him day and night." God also gives us examples in the Quran of tasks we can do to always remember, and not forget, God such as salat or the contact prayers, "Recite what is revealed to you of the scripture, and observe the contact prayers (Salat). The contact prayers (Salat) will help you avoid evil works and vice. But the remembrance of God (through Salat) is the most important thing. God knows everything you do" (29:45). Our Creator also speaks of reciting Quran and meditation, among other ways, as a means used toward remembrance. We also learn of His extreme mercy, "This is a reminder; whoever wills let him choose the path to his Lord. Your Lord knows that you meditate during two-thirds of the night, or half of it, or one-third of it, and so do some of those who believed with you. God has designed the night and the day, and He knows that you cannot always do this. He has pardoned you. Instead, you shall read what you can of the Quran Observe the contact prayers (Salat), give the obligatory charity (Zakat), and lend God a loan of righteousness. ...And implore God God for forgiveness. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful" (73:19-20). God, in all His kindness, even tells us what to say whenever we do forget God and His commandments, "You shall not say that **you will do** anything in the future without saying, 'God willing.' This is to remind you of your Lord. If you forget, then say, 'May my Lord guide me to do better next time.'" (18:23-24).

We should not allow ourselves to fall into the category of those who say they believe, but do not live according to God's teachings. We must strive to remember God's teachings as much as we can. Forgetting God is not one of those situations, such as childbirth, when forgetfulness is a benefit. Whenever we forget God's commandments Satan is waiting, ever ready to entice us. "Shall we treat those who believed and led a righteous life as we treat those who committed evil on earth? Shall we treat the righteous as we treat the wicked? This is a scripture that we sent down to you, that is sacred- perhaps they will reflect on its verses. Those who possess intelligence will take heed" (38:28-29).