

Feeling Awe in Seeking the Divine April 17, 2026

inna alladhīna yakhshawna rabbahum bil-ghaybi lahum maghfiratun wa-ajrun kabīr (Surah Al Mulk 67:12)

Indeed, those in awe of their Lord without seeing Him will have forgiveness and a mighty reward

In Surah Al-Mulk, Allah-u Ta'ala promises a profound reward to those who feel awe toward their Lord without seeing Him with their physical eyes. Though He is Al-Ghayb — the Unseen — the verse implies that we are nonetheless capable of witnessing His manifestations and struck by awe. Surah Al-Fatir (35:28) further emphasizes that only those who are knowledgeable of Allah's might truly experience this awe, connecting understanding with profound appreciation. This admiration is universal. Surah Ar-Ra'd (13:13) describes how even the thunder and the angels glorify Him, proving that the entire creation exists in a state of awe-struck devotion.

What does it mean to be in awe? Awe is the feeling we get when we experience something so vast and so extraordinary that we cannot comprehend it. The limits of our understanding are stretched by awe. It makes us feel small and humble, almost diminishing our sense of self or ego. But at the same time, it connects us to something larger than ourselves, making us feel like we are part of a greater whole. Awe is simultaneously the feeling of insignificance and belonging.

Those who experience awe begin to see themselves as less separate, less isolated ;their sense of self expands beyond the individual and dissolves into the larger fabric of existence. Awe lifts people above the noise of everyday concerns, such as the relentless pursuit of material wealth, or the weight of hardships and difficulties that seem endless. Awe offers, in their place, a broader and brighter perspective. It is a profound emotion, one felt most deeply, perhaps, by those whose hearts are already open to witness something beyond the boundaries of self, of ego.

Awe is the emotion that seekers of divine knowledge long to experience. As they draw closer to the Divine, they feel a profound sense of amazement and wonder. Yet when it comes to His essence, the human intellect reaches its limits. We simply cannot comprehend. When we realize the intellect's incapacity to comprehend the essence of Allah, we feel amazement. This is the understanding of weakness and inadequacy of the intellect before Allah. That is the ultimate point in reaching Divine Knowledge. So the one who knows Allah best is the one who is most amazed by Him.

Dhu'n-Nūn al-Misri (ks) expressed this beautifully, by saying, "The one who knows Allah best is the one who is most filled with wonder about Him."

Junayd al-Baghdadi (ks) said, "The furthest point thought can reach is amazement." Amazement begins when thought reaches its end.

Sahl al-Tustari (ks) stated, "The ultimate point of ma'rifa, knowledge of the divine, is amazement" (Kushayri, p. 605). In this context, the mind becomes amazed when it realizes its incapacity to comprehend the essence of Allah. So true ma'rifa is understanding the weakness and inadequacy of the intellect before Allah.

We seek miracles to strengthen our faith, to feel awe of our creator, yet we are immersed in His wonders. His amazing signs are constantly revealed to us. We are not short of miracles; they are ever-present for those who can see. In Surah Ali Imran, (3: 190) Allah-u Ta'ala states in a verse, "Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding." This verse highlights the abundant signs and evidence of His Divine existence, which should naturally inspire awe for His Majesty. The question is: are we able to see those signs?

Awe brings deep admiration. It is so strange that we do not admire the creation as much as we admire our smartphones, their functionality of messaging, calls, videos, reading, conferencing and AI applications that answer all questions we have. We admire the inventors of these technologies. But, do we admire the arctic tern, a 100 gr bird, as much as we admire our smartphones?

The tern processes billions of signals per second, can find direction, hunt, escape from its predators, know its orientation, find food, mate, and during its lifetime, travels about 2.4 million kms. (Three times back and forth to the moon). It does not need a charger, or a plastic protector; it does not break when it falls, and does not need to be upgraded once every two years. Where is our admiration for the creator of the arctic tern? And where is our admiration for monarch butterflies that travel thousands of miles to specific trees in Mexico without a GPS device, a destination they have never seen, it takes four generations to reach their final destination; there is no way they learn the path from their ancestors. They carry the map within their DNA.

What has taken away our admiration, and blinded us to the miracles unfolding every moment? What is it that has dulled our sense of wonder? What kind of veil has fallen over our hearts, blinding us to the miracles that are offered to us in every moment, in every breath we inhale, every ray of light that falls, every beat of a heart that keeps beating autonomously? We are surrounded by the miraculous, yet we have grown so accustomed to it that we no longer recognize it.

While the experience of awe in the presence of daily miracles in our lives increases humility and a sense of connection with the creation and the divine, a materialistic and self centered individualistic life steals the feeling of awe from people. We lose our admiration and the awe that a faithful person must feel in front of their creator. We lose our sense of appreciation which diminishes our sense of gratefulness

and blinds our eyes to the blessings that surround us. Allah-u Ta'ala invites us to reflect upon what He has created: that is where we can see His attributes. With all the signals that fall on our senses, with the ability to reason, using our intelligence, He invites us to realize His attributes and expects us to be in awe.

May Allah increase our appreciation of his Divine Witness and enable us to use the gifts He bestowed upon for His sake and May He accept our devotions. May he also forgive our sins that we have committed in the past and we may commit in the future.

Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi