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Near-Death Experiences: An Ontological Perspective from the Quran and Ḥadīth

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 15 November 2024 Revised: 10 January 2024 Accepted: 12 February 2025		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Near-death experiences (NDEs) have garnered significant attention, particularly in recent years. Existing explanations in this field have often failed to provide a comprehensive analysis of these experiences due to their neglect of ontological and anthropological dimensions. This study aims to offer a religious ontological explanation of NDEs by drawing on Quranic verses and narrations related to the nature of the world and human existence.	
Key Words: Near-Death Experiences ‘Ālam al-Barzakh ‘Ālam al-Mithāl ‘Ālam al-Malakūt ‘Ālam al-Nāsūt ‘Ālam al-Tajarrud ‘Ālam al-Māddah		METHOD & FINDING: The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach, utilizing Islamic religious texts to explore the immaterial dimension of the human soul and its connection to ‘Ālam al-Barzakh (the intermediate realm). According to religious teachings, when the soul's attention to the body diminishes and sensory faculties cease their activity, the soul, aided by the faculty of imagination, perceives phenomena. The faculty of imagination has several characteristics that may influence these perceptions, including the creation of unreal images, the retention of past observations, the potential influence of Satan, and its connection to the intermediate realm. Islamic scriptures describe existence as encompassing multiple realms, from Khazā'in 'ind Allāh (the divine treasures) to ‘Ālam al-Dunyā (the material world), with the intermediate realm bearing significant similarities to NDEs.	
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2025.10410		CONCLUSION: From the perspective of religious literature, it appears that when the soul's attention to the material dimension decreases, it may enter the intermediate realm and experience real observations. These observations, however, occur for specific individuals and may, in some cases, be influenced by their imagination, leading to perceptions that are limited to imaginary constructs. This study highlights the importance of integrating ontological and anthropological dimensions into the analysis of near-death experiences, offering a framework rooted in Islamic teachings.	
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Introduction

Near-death experiences (NDEs) are often characterized by reports of individuals feeling as though they have left their physical bodies, encountering non-material realms, and ultimately returning to their earthly existence. This phenomenon has garnered significant interest and debate across various scientific, philosophical, and religious disciplines. The topic was notably brought to the forefront by Raymond Moody, an American philosopher and psychologist, with the publication of his seminal work, *Life After Life*, in 1975. In this groundbreaking book, Moody meticulously examined the accounts of individuals who had undergone near-death situations, establishing a foundational discourse in the study of NDEs. His work rapidly became a pivotal reference in the field, inspiring both researchers and enthusiasts alike (Wolf, 2007, p. 826).

Near-death experiences have been reported in various forms in different cultures and throughout history. These experiences usually include feelings of peace, seeing a bright light, meeting with non-material beings or lost loved ones, and in some cases, returning to life with profound changes in the individual's attitude and behavior. With scientific and technological advances in recent years, this phenomenon has been studied more seriously. Researchers have offered a variety of explanations

for this phenomenon, given the profound transformations of these experiences and their structural similarities in different individuals. Moody, as one of the pioneers in this field, has classified possible explanations into three categories: supernatural, natural, and psychological. Supernatural explanations refer to the existence of worlds beyond material life, while natural explanations address biological and chemical factors in the brain at the time of near-death. Psychological explanations also refer to the mental experiences and psychological effects of these conditions (Moody, 1998, p.161). Each of these explanations, despite its own appeal, also faces shortcomings that indicate the need for further investigation.

This study utilizes a descriptive-analytical approach, drawing on Islamic texts to investigate the non-material aspect of the human soul and its connection to *'Ālam al-Barzakh* (the intermediate realm). When the soul's focus shifts from the body, it uses the faculty of imagination to perceive phenomena, which can be influenced by imagined constructs, past experiences, and external factors. Islamic scriptures describe existence as comprising various realms, from *Khazā'in 'ind Allāh* (the divine treasuries) to *'Ālam al-Dunyā* (the material world), with parallels to near-death experiences (NDEs).

In summary, as the soul detaches from the material realm, it may enter the intermediate realm and have genuine experiences, although these are often shaped by imagination. This study underscores the importance of incorporating ontological and anthropological perspectives within the analysis of near-death experiences, grounded in Islamic teachings.

Examining the teachings of the Quran and Islamic narrations can help us to understand these experiences more deeply. In the Quran and Islamic narrations, numerous discussions have been raised about the reality of the universe and man and the characteristics of both. These teachings can be used as a theoretical framework for analyzing near-death experiences and help us to achieve a more reasonable and comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. Despite the differences in the components of these experiences, leaving the body, perceptions, and observations outside the body and returning to it are of interest to experts (Moody, 1994; Valarino, 1980; Fox, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

1. Near-Death Experiences (NDEs)

NDEs typically involve reports of consciousness detaching from the body, encounters with non-physical entities or landscapes, or an overwhelming sense of clarity and unity. While neuroscience offers several explanatory models, Islamic philosophical thought invites a

different kind of analysis—one that sees the soul as capable of temporarily disengaging from its material constraints and perceiving other dimensions of existence. Rather than dismissing these experiences as illusory, this tradition frames them as potentially valid glimpses into a wider ontological spectrum (Lings, 2005, p. 47).

2. ‘Ālam al-Barzakh (The Intermediate World)

The term Barzakh means a barrier or isthmus—a transitional space. In Islamic cosmology, it refers to the stage of existence between physical death and ultimate resurrection, where the soul remains conscious and responsive. This intermediate realm can also be interpreted philosophically as a segment of the imaginal domain, specifically that which is *Mithāl al-Munfaṣil* (independent of individual imagination). During an NDE, one might enter this Barzakh state, experiencing realities that are structured but immaterial, suggesting a genuine metaphysical location rather than a psychological projection (Chittick, 1989, p. 112).

3. ‘Ālam al-Mithāl (The Imaginal World)

Often mistranslated or misunderstood in modern discourse, the imaginal world is not a realm of fantasy or mere mental imagery. It is a real ontological domain that sits between the material and the intellectual. In this intermediate realm, forms exist without physical substance

but retain recognizable shapes. Islamic philosophers distinguish between two levels within this world: the connected imaginal (forms generated within one's own psyche, such as dreams) and the disconnected imaginal (objective imaginal realities that exist independently of human cognition). It is in this latter domain that many elements of NDEs—such as meeting otherworldly figures or traversing unearthly spaces—may take place (Corbin, 1972, p. 85).

4. 'Ālam al-Malakūt (The Spiritual Realm)

This term denotes the invisible, governing dimension of reality, often associated with angels, divine order, and non-material intelligences. The malakūt is more closely aligned with the intellectual realm in Islamic cosmology, representing a domain of immaterial intelligences and causes that shape the material world from beyond. When individuals undergoing NDEs describe luminous beings or a heightened awareness of universal order, these could correspond to momentary contact with this realm. From this perspective, malakūt is not a poetic abstraction, but a structural level of reality in which the soul is at home (Naṣr, 1993, p. 64).

5. 'Ālam al-Nāsūt (The Physical World)

'Ālam al-Nāsūt represents the realm of bodily existence—what we typically refer to as the material or sensory world. It is the realm of extension, space, time,

and change, where matter is subject to growth and decay. Human beings, in this context, live a dual life: grounded in this physical domain while also bearing within themselves a latent openness to higher realms. When NDEs involve a departure from the physical body or the perception of the body from an external vantage point, it implies a temporary break from the confines of the *Nāsūt* (Izutsu, 1983, p. 93).

6. 'Ālam al-Tajarrud (The Realm of Abstraction)

This is the most subtle and abstract of the three comprehensive realms recognized in Islamic metaphysics. Tajarrud implies complete freedom from material form—not just in the sense of lacking a body, but in being stripped of all dependence on space, time, and imagery. It is the realm of pure intellect, where truths are apprehended directly, without mediation. While most NDEs do not reach this level, certain reports that describe unity with all being, or a formless light beyond description, may reflect a brief encounter with this highest ontological domain (Suhrawardi, 1999, p. 137).

7. 'Ālam al-Māddah (The Realm of Matter)

The lowest stratum of existence in this schema is the world of matter, characterized by its physical limitations, temporality, and perceptibility through the senses. It is the world we most immediately inhabit and the stage for our moral and spiritual development.

Yet, from the perspective of Islamic ontology, it is only the outermost layer of a far more intricate structure of reality. NDEs may momentarily lift the soul beyond this dense material level, making visible what usually remains hidden beneath or beyond the world of sense (Murata & Chittick, 1994, p. 72).

Literature Review

In the field of near-death experiences based on narration, some research has been conducted, which we will mention as follows:

- *Validation of Near-Death Experiences in the Realm of Islamic Theology* by Shanzeri and Farahnakian, presented at the *International Conference on Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, 2013. This study adopts an epistemological perspective on near-death experiences, whereas the current research takes an ontological approach.
<https://sid.ir/paper/866631/fa>
- *An Examination of the Characteristics of Near-Death Experiences from the Perspectives of Reason, Tradition, and Experience* by Salarian, *University of Quran and Hadith*, 2020. This work focuses on describing the features of near-death experiences, while the present research is concerned with the nature and identity of these experiences.
- *A Critique of the Reality of Near-*

Death Experiences Based on Quranic Teachings and Narrations by Gohari, *Religious Research Journal*, 2009. This study is also epistemological in nature and does not delve into the analysis or explanation of the identity of these experiences.

- *A Comparative Study of Near-Death Experiences with Descriptive Teachings of the Quran and Narrations* by Fatima Banan, *University of Quranic Sciences and Education*, 2020. In this work, the author describes the experiences reported by individuals and the events occurring during these experiences, along with relevant Quranic verses and narrations. However, the current research focuses on the whatness (quiddity) of these experiences from a traditional (narrational) perspective.

Given the importance of this topic in human life and its profound impact on individual perspectives and beliefs, investigating the nature and quiddity of near-death experiences from the perspective of Quranic and narrational teachings is of significant importance.

Research Method

The current research, employing a descriptive-analytical method and based on verses and hadiths concerning the reality of the world and humanity, aims to present a religious ontological explanation grounded in these texts.

1. Worlds of Existence in Verses and Hadiths

In the verses of the Quran and Hadiths, various worlds are mentioned, such as the world of Dunyā (The Quran, 30:7), the world of Barzakh (The Quran, 23:100), the world of the Hereafter (The Quran, 30:7), Paradise, and Hell, etc. Each of these worlds has its characteristics and conditions. According to some commentators, such as ‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, some verses indicate a descending relationship among the worlds, i.e., the world of existence began with Allah, and after the world of Barzakh came into existence, the world of this world came into existence (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2009, p. 164). In this respect, Allah said, “*And there is nothing except with Us are its treasures, and We do not send it down except in a known measure*” (The Quran, 15:21).

‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī said that the generality of this verse requires that all beings and creatures of the universe have an extensive, immeasurable, and unlimited existence in the sight of God, because measurement and limitation are achieved through revelation. On the other hand, since what remains with Allah is “*what you have will run out, but what remains with Allah*” (The Quran, 16:96), revelation will not be staggered, and what is revealed remains in its original position. In other words, it is hanging and not throwing. Therefore,

every being has a non-quantitative and unlimited existence and a quantitative existence (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2009, p. 164). The beings and the world that have quantity but do not have matter, like what we see in dreams, are the world of Barzakh and the beings of Barzakh, and if they are accompanied by matter and material properties, like what we see with the eyes, it is the world of Dunyā. This analysis shows that the worlds of existence are compatible with each other and their difference is in terms of honor and superiority (Ibid).

The world of Barzakh is the inner world of the external world of Donya. The Quran said, “*They know outwardly of the life of this world, but of the Hereafter they are heedless*” (The Quran, 30:7). Barzakh and the Day of Judgment are inner worlds that the people of the world are oblivious to and only look at the appearance of the life of this world. These inner worlds have certain characteristics in the verses and narrations. Some of which come as follows:

- They are alive. In this respect, Allah said, “*And this worldly life is nothing but amusement and play, and indeed, the Home of the Hereafter is for them the living, if only they knew*” (The Quran, 29:64). According to the mentioned verse, there is real life in the inner world.
- They have awareness. In this respect, Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib said, “People are asleep, so when they die, they will be

mindful” (Sharīf al-Raḍī, 1985, p. 112). Going over the heads of the slain infidels in the well of Badr and speaking to them, in response to the question ‘O Messenger of Allah, do they not hear?’, the Prophet Muhammad replied, “You are not more hearing than them” (Fakhr al-Rāzī, 1999, Vol. 14, p. 309).

- The body and extension exist there. Imam al-Ṣādiq said, “When Allah the Almighty takes it (the soul), He places that spirit in a form like its form in this world, so they eat and drink. When a newcomer arrives at them, they recognize him by that same form he had in the worldly life” (Kulayni, 1986, Vol. 3, p. 245). Amir al-Mu'minin Ali stated, “If it were unveiled for you, you would see them gathered in circles, conversing” (Ibid., p. 243). Sitting in circles, conversing, being visible, and interacting all indicate the existence of extension. (Ṣādeqi, 2018, p. 3).
- The inner realms are free from contradiction and conflict. Allah said, “*There they will have whatever they wish*” (The Quran, 25:16). Since *Barzakh* (the intermediary world) and the inner realm are non-material, there is naturally no contradiction or conflict there.
- Psychological states such as fear, hope, joy, and pleasure exist.

Allah said, “*In it we are untouched by toil, and untouched by fatigue*” (The Quran, 35:35). In this respect, Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib said, “They witnessed the hardships of the Hereafter as more severe than what they had feared. At that time, they experience the utmost degree of fear and hope” (Sharīf al-Raḍī, 2008, Vol. 4, p. 700).

- The ineffability of inner perceptions and observations:
As expressed by Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, if the dead were to speak after death, they would be unable to describe what they have witnessed and perceived with their own eyes (Ibid).
- In the inner realms, there is a non-physical, metaphysical space. Thus, unlike the material world, humans are not confined by space and time. A man once said to Imam al-Ṣādiq, “I have a brother living in Baghdad, and I fear he may die there.” The Imam replied, “Do not grieve over who dies where. When a believer dies in the east or west of the world, Allah transfers his soul to *Wādī l-Salām* (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1985, Vol. 25, p. 632).
- The path to the inner realm requires transcending the external. If a person moves beyond the external, detaches from it, reduces their attachment, and avoids heedlessness, they can step into the realm of the inner. Allah said, “*But*

they, of the Hereafter, are heedless”
(The Quran, 30:7).

- In the inner world, metaphysical tools are effective, not sensory means. Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib said, “When revelation descended, I would hear the wailing of Satan. I asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, what is this sound?’ He replied, ‘It is Satan, despairing that he will no longer be worshipped. You hear what I hear and see what I see, except that you are not a prophet—but you are my minister, and you are on the path of goodness” (Sharīf al-Raḍī, 2008, Sermon No.192).
- In the inner realms, observing the material world and its beings is possible. When a person enters the Barzakh and ‘*Alam al-Mithal* (the world of images), they can visit and see their loved ones. Imam al-Ṣādiq said, “Indeed, the believer visits his family and sees what pleases him, while what displeases him is concealed. As for the disbeliever, he visits his family and sees what displeases him, while what pleases him is concealed” (Kulayni, 1986, Vol. 3, p. 230; Majlisī, 1983, Vol. 14, p. 196).
- Empirical study of near-death experiences (NDEs) reveals their shared characteristics with the inner realm. Near-death experiences share common features with the metaphysical realm in terms of

characteristics and conditions. Those who have had these experiences claim to have perceived true life and attained a special awareness (Long & Perry, 2010, p. 62). They report possessing a Barzakhī (intermediate) body with particular extension (Moody, 1998, p. 58) and having encountered beings with non-material forms (Morse, 2001, p. 149). Their experiences were not limited by physical space and time (Moody, 1998, p. 145; Ṣādeqi, 2018, pp. 157-170), and conflict and contradiction were diminished in them (Moody, 1994, p. 77). Emotional states like fear and pleasure were at their peak, yet they found it difficult to fully describe the truths they witnessed. By transcending the physical and reducing their focus on the body, they accessed the inner realm and perceived reality through metaphysical faculties (Tavana, 2017, p. 45).

- Some reported observations of the material world (Morse, 2001, p. 149; Hammond, 1995, p. 23). These shared aspects between the metaphysical realm and near-death experiences provide a suitable framework for analyzing such experiences within the context of the inner realm. As we will see, by moving beyond the material world and its sensory appearances, an individual enters metaphysical realms that have various levels, beginning from the inner dimension

of the human being and extending to *Barzakhī* (intermediate) and *Mithālī* (imaginal) worlds.

2. The Soul and the Barzakh

In the verses and narrations, human beings are described as having an immaterial soul in addition to their material and physical dimensions. For example, the Quran states, “*Allah causes souls to die*” (The Quran, 39:42) and “*Say: The angel of death causes you to die*” (The Quran, 32:11). It illustrates that human reality begins with the body and the material dimension, and through a process of transition, enters the immaterial and abstract dimension known as intermission. The Quran further elaborates, “*And We created man from a stock of clay... Then We created him as a second creation...*” (The Quran, 23:12-14). After the material creation of man and his engagement with the physical dimension, the immaterial dimension of man is brought into existence (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1970, Vol.1, p. 352; Ḥosseini Tehrāni, 2005, pp. 151-152; Ḥosseini Tehrāni, 2006, Vol. 4, p.20; Ṣādeqi Tehrāni, 2009, Vol. 4, p. 430).

Accordingly, the soul fundamentally has a Barzakh (intermediary) and immaterial identity. The Barzakh nature of the soul can also be understood through the experiences described in the world of Barzakh, such as blessings, punishments, eating, and other phenomena. ‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī

considered the verse, “*The people of Paradise will have a better home and a better place to stay that Day, and a better place to rest*” (The Quran, 25:24), to be one of the clearest references to the world of Barzakh. This verse suggests that in the world of Barzakh, the soul enters a state akin to a nap, signifying its immaterial nature and its Barzakh dimension. When the soul reduces its attention to the material realm, it transitions to its Barzakh level and its Mithālī (exemplary) world, returning to its origin (Mohammadsadeghipour et al., 2023).

The transition to the *Barzakh* level becomes evident in the verses and narrations concerning death. By ceasing its attention to the material body, the soul simultaneously enters the immaterial dimension of existence. For instance, concerning a believer who was martyred by his people, Allah said, “*It was said, ‘Enter Paradise’*” (The Quran, 36:26).

‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī highlighted that the Quran’s reporting of his immediate entrance into Paradise without mentioning an interval indicates the absence of delay between his martyrdom and entry into the Barzakh Paradise (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, Vol. 17, p. 115). Conversely, the sinful people of Noah, after drowning and separating from their material bodies, were admitted to the Fire in the intermediary realm, “*Because of their sins, they were*

drowned; then they were admitted to the Fire” (The Quran, 71:25).

Moreover, the Quran states concerning Satan, *“I see what you do not see” (The Quran, 8:48).* Additionally, the Prophet said, *“If you had not increased your talk and mixed your hearts, you would have seen what I see and heard what I hear” (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, vol. 5, p. 271).* This implies that by reducing attachments to the material body and focusing on the inner senses, one can perceive the Barzakh realm. For example, in near-death experiences, individuals describe heightened perceptions and observations as their connection to the material body weakens. Ayatollah Qūchānī recounts observing wild animals at his funeral and luminous individuals, including Ḥaḍrat Abbas and Ḥaḍrat Ali Akbar, aiding him (Najafī Qūchānī, 2001, p. 73).

3. The Soul and the Barzakh Body

Many accounts describe the presence of a barzakh body after the soul’s separation from the physical body. This body resembles the human form but differs in nature. For example, Sheikh Muḥīd states, *“Indeed, Allah the Almighty creates for them bodies like their worldly bodies, granting blessings to the believers and punishing disbelievers and sinners therein” (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 58, p. 83).* Imam al-Ṣādiq (PBUH) also mentioned, *“When the soul separates*

from the body, the spirit assumes the same form and state as it had in worldly life” (Ṭūsī, 1986, p. 66; Shu’ayri, 1984, p. 171). Thus, the Barzakh body, referred to by Raymond Moody as the ‘spiritual body’ (Moody, 1998, p. 137), possesses unique characteristics suited to the intermediary realm.

While the immaterial body liberates the soul from spatial, temporal, and sensory constraints, its perceptual capabilities depend on the individual’s actions. Some of the characteristics are as follows:

- **Blindness in the Hereafter Due to Neglect of God**

In this world, evil deeds can impair or destroy one’s inner senses, leading to blindness or deafness in the hereafter, where inner faculties are the primary means of communication. The Quran states, *“Rather, the hearts within the chests will become blind” (The Quran, 22:46),* and *“Whoever turns away from My remembrance... will be resurrected blind” (The Quran, 20:125-126).*

- **Differences in Observations Based on Faith**

The Quran and narrations suggest that a believer’s experiences in the Barzakh and resurrection are pleasing and aligned with their righteous deeds, while disbelievers face distressing perceptions. For example, pious individuals are granted gardens of paradise to explore (Kulayni, 1986, vol. 8, p. 99).

Those who have had near-death experiences report expanded spatial and temporal perceptions, such as feeling present in multiple places simultaneously or perceiving the cessation of time. Such freedoms are conditioned by one's actions, creating distinctions in the experiences of the righteous and the sinful.

- **The Soul, Imagination, and Satanic Interventions**

The human soul operates through various faculties, as mentioned in the Quran, *"And He has made for you hearing, eyesight, and hearts; perhaps you will be grateful"* (The Quran, 16: 78). Imam Ali said, "The intellects are the leaders of thoughts, thoughts are the leaders of hearts, hearts are the leaders of the senses, and the senses are the leaders of the organs" (Karājakī, 1989, Vol. 1, p. 200).

In the absence of external sensory faculties, the imaginative faculty plays a critical role in perception. 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī stated, "The imaginative faculty is that inner power that performs the act of perception and is engaged in activity" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, Vol. 11, p. 367). For instance, during dreams, when external faculties are inactive, perceptions are facilitated by the imaginative faculty. Similarly, the Quran describes how Pharaoh's magicians used illusion to make their ropes appear to move, *"They imagined that their ropes and staffs were moving"* (The Quran, 20: 66).

Therefore, when external faculties are inactive, the imaginative faculty becomes central to perception, enabling the soul to engage with the immaterial dimensions of existence.

4. Examination of Narratives Related to Imagination

An examination of narratives concerning the imagination reveals several key points:

4.1. Imagination in Forming Representations

The imaginative faculty is engaged in forming representations. For instance, Imam Ali responded to a Jew that the Quraysh always devised plans and envisioned the plot to murder the Prophet. The Quran, 20: 66, also highlights the role of imagination in fostering superficiality, which facilitates the proliferation of baseless and false representations and lays the groundwork for deceit and trickery. These issues arise due to deviations and dysfunctions in the operation of imagination. A deviation from the straight path allows deceit, illusion, and non-existent manifestations to gain further traction.

4.2. Imagination as a Playground for Satan

The imaginative faculty can serve as a playground for Satan, enabling him to shape and present to humans whatever he desires. Ibn Fahd Ḥilli stated, "Imagination is the hunting ground, trickery, and schemes of Satan. Indeed,

this imagination is one of the deceptions of Satan, and therein he has traps” (Hilli, 1986, p. 220). The Quran affirms that one of Satan’s tasks is to beautify actions, portraying ugly deeds as beautiful and making wrongs appear appealing, “*And when Satan beautified for them their deeds...*” (The Quran, 8:48). Imam Ja’far al-Ṣādiq mentioned, “Indeed, there is a devil named *Huzz’* who fills the space between the east and west each night, causing chaotic visions in people’s dreams” (Ṣadūq, 1997, p. 146; Fattal Neyshābūrī, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 492).

When external senses cease their activities, the inner faculties take over, providing an opportunity for Satan to impose his objectives. Thus, the Prophet and the Imams have stated that Satan cannot appear in the form of the Prophet or the divine saints (Ṣadūq, 1992, vol. 2, p. 585). Imam Ja’far al-Ṣādiq also advised seeking refuge in God to avoid being influenced by Satan during sleep (Kulayni, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 536; 1993, Vol. 5, p. 110).

4.3. Imagination as a Pathway to the Inner Realm

The imaginative faculty serves as a gateway into the inner realm. Examples include true visions experienced by figures like the Prophet Joseph and the Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham, for instance, transcended the external world to witness truths within the inner and intermediate realms. Similarly, Prophet Joseph foresaw future worldly

events, such as the prostration of his father and brothers, through his imaginative faculties.

4.4. Divine Control of Imagination

At times, the imaginative faculty is under the control of God Almighty. For example, Allah said, “*When Allah showed them to you in your dream as few...*” (The Quran, 8: 43), and “*And We did not make the vision which We showed you...*” (The Quran, 17: 60). These verses indicate that God reveals matters to the Prophet in dream states, demonstrating that the Prophet’s imagination is under divine control.

4.5. Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) and Imagination

The inner perceptions and observations of near-death experiencers (NDEs) occur through the imaginative faculty, which can reveal the following hints:

4.5.1. Truths from the Realm of Barzakh (Intermediary Realm)

An example is the account of Sheikh Ḥassan ‘Alī Iṣfahānī, who, during a near-death state, reportedly visited Imam al-Riḍa and requested an extension to complete his will (Meqdadi Iṣfahānī, 1994, Vol. 1, pp. 31-32). Some NDEs also involve knowledge of future events, as seen in Moody’s reports, where experiencers described events that later occurred in their lives.

4.5.2. Constructs of the Imagination

Imaginative constructs may arise during NDEs. For instance, individuals may

perceive scenes resembling their prior knowledge, such as telephones or other familiar objects in the spiritual and Barzakh realms (Najafi Qūchānī, 2001, pp. 145- 155).

4.5.3. Manipulations by Satan

In some cases, the imaginative faculty may be subject to satanic influences, leading to deceptive visions.

4.5.4. Influence of Pre-existing Knowledge

Reports suggest that prior experiences and knowledge shape NDEs. For instance, an experiencer described seeing impactful events of their life on a screen, while another described recalling life moments in vivid detail within fractions of a second (Moody, 1998, p. 120).

5. The Soul and Pre-existing Knowledge

Quranic verses and aḥādīth confirm that when the soul reduces its connection with the body, internal faculties and imagination become active. Factors such as mental state, prior thoughts, physical and spiritual conditions, personal inclinations, and spiritual purity significantly influence these perceptions (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, Vol. 11, p. 376). For instance, dreams may arise from bodily humors or thoughts (Qomi, 1993, Vol. 3, p. 246). *Aḍḡāth Aḥlām* (muddled dreams) are linked to these influences, reflecting prior thoughts, bodily conditions, or moral and spiritual qualities (Majlisī, 1993, Vol.

58, p. 191; Ṭurayḥī, 1996, Vol. 1, p. 169; Kāshānī, 1972, Vol. 4, p. 204).

In summary, the imaginative faculty plays a dual role. On one hand, it facilitates the perception of truths and divine revelations. On the other hand, it is susceptible to deviation, manipulation by Satan, and the influence of prior knowledge. This complexity highlights the need for critical examination when interpreting imaginative experiences, particularly those related to NDEs.

6. The Soul and Intuitive Perception

In the discussion of perception and observation, Quranic verses and aḥādīth address the human soul as the perceiver, observer, and actor. The soul is regarded as the one who sees, tastes, and so on, indicating that, from the perspective of religious texts, the faculties and senses are merely tools in service of the soul, while the soul itself is the primary agent of action. In this regard, Allah said, “So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it” (The Quran, 99: 7-8).

On one hand, this verse speaks of the doer who performs actions in the worldly life, i.e., when they possess external senses, limbs, and so on. On the other hand, it speaks of the observer who witnesses their actions in the afterlife and on the Day of Judgment, i.e., when they no longer have a physical body or material senses like eyes and ears. In this verse, the doer is also the observer.

Regarding a person who passed away and entered the realm of *Barzakh*, leaving behind their physical body and material faculties, Imam Ja'far al-Şādiq (PBUH) said, “They visit their family—whether they are believers or disbelievers—and travel to the material world. If they are believers, they see good things, and if they are disbelievers, they see bad ones” (Kulayni, 1986, vol. 3, p. 230; Majlisī, 1983, vol. 14, p. 196). In this narration, the act of seeing and the observer are mentioned, even though there is no physical eye to facilitate this seeing. This indicates that the human soul, while connected to the physical body, utilizes sensory tools, but when it distances itself from the body and material tools, it employs other means for perception.

Regarding other perceptions, such as hearing and even speaking, the following narration of the Prophet is noteworthy. The Prophet addressed the dead and spoke to them. At that time, his companions asked him, “Are you speaking to the dead who cannot hear?” The Prophet replied, “They hear better than you, and if they were permitted, they would speak to you” (Mufid, 1992, p. 392; 1993, p. 92).

In reports from those who have had near-death experiences, it is mentioned that they were able to see and hear, and despite being largely detached from

their physical bodies, they could observe events and occurrences around them.

The late Qūchānī, in the book *Siyāḥat-e Ġarb* (the journey to the west point of horizon), wrote, “I saw myself standing, my illness healed, and I was healthy. My relatives had gathered around my corpse, while weeping. Seeing this scene, I was distressed and said to them, “I am not dead; rather, my illness has been cured. I saw people heading toward my house, leaving me alone in the grave, even my family, for whom I had done everything to ensure their comfort (Najafi Qūchānī, 2001, pp. 72-73).

Another reporter wrote, “I slowly moved upward and saw the nurses rushing toward my room” (Moody, 1998, p. 131). Based on this, considering the intuitive perception of the soul, such reports can be attributed to the direct observation of the soul, which sometimes uses external senses and at other times employs other means. The key point is that the observer and listener are the soul, which, even after distancing itself from the physical body, remains an observer and listener.

Conclusion

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in Islamic religious texts to explore the interplay between the immaterial human soul and *Ālam al-Barzakh* (the intermediate realm). The findings indicate that as the soul detaches from

the material body, it may enter the Barzakh realm, facilitating access to profound spiritual truths. However, the quality of these experiences is influenced by the individual's state of faith, purity, and moral character. Those with a spiritually committed life tend to engage with deeper Barzakhi realities, while others may only encounter memories and thoughts that limit their understanding of existence.

We argue that near-death experiences (NDEs) cannot be entirely understood through the material lens, as they often encompass encounters with light and feelings of peace that signify a dimension beyond the physical world. Nevertheless, perceptions during these experiences can be clouded by personal biases, beliefs, and even malevolent influences, thereby complicating their evaluation as objective truths.

To advance this area of study, future research could investigate the impact of individual spirituality on perceptions of the Barzakh realm during NDEs. Additionally, comparative studies with other cultural or religious interpretations of the intermediate realm could yield deeper insights into the commonalities and differences in these existential experiences. Establishing a more comprehensive understanding of the *Barzakhi* dimension may enhance our grasp of the human experience beyond

death and contribute to the ongoing discourse on spirituality and consciousness.

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