


Embodiment of Deeds in Near-Death Experiences: A Qur'anic and Theological Analysis Based on the Views of Allameh Tabataba'i

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Article History: Received 14 February 2024; Accepted 21 May 2024

ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

The concept of the embodiment of deeds is discussed within the framework of Islamic eschatology, specifically concerning the afterlife, the recompense of actions, and divine justice. This study investigates the embodiment of deeds as reflected in Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) and examines its alignment with Islamic eschatological principles. Drawing on Qur'anic verses, Hadiths, and the philosophical insights of Allameh Tabataba'i, the research emphasizes the intrinsic connection between actions, the soul, and their eternal forms. Employing a descriptive-analytical method, over one hundred NDE accounts from Iranian Shi'a Muslims were analyzed.

The findings reveal various forms of embodiment, including the manifestation of significant physical actions, spiritual qualities, and the perception of life events and their consequences. The study concludes that the ontological nature of NDEs corresponds closely to the initial stages of the intermediary realm (Barzakh), based on Tabataba'i perspective. By bridging empirical observations with Islamic teachings on divine justice and

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the system of reward and punishment, the research offers new insights into the interconnectedness of human actions and their spiritual realities. This multidisciplinary approach enriches contemporary discourse on the afterlife, highlighting the transformative potential of NDEs in fostering moral and spiritual awareness. The research further demonstrates that the embodiment of deeds, as reported in NDEs, is substantiated by both reason and revelation, with Qur'anic-philosophical interpretations from Allameh Tabataba'i providing a robust explanatory framework.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an, Near-death experience (NDE), Islamic theology, Embodiment of deeds, Eschatology, Intermediary realm, *Barzakh*, Allameh Tabataba'i

1. Introduction

In some Qur'anic verses and Hadith, the system of recompense in the afterlife is characterized by the manifestation or embodiment of deeds. The fundamental principle underlying this system is the concept of objectivity, where actions have concrete consequences. The term *tajassum* (embodiment) is derived from *jism* (body), which refers to anything that occupies space, moves, and is perceptible, encompassing humans, animals, plants, and other entities (Muṣṭafawī 1989, 2: 88). In some narrations, the embodiment of deeds is expressed as *tamaththul* (representation). Although the concept of deed embodiment is explicitly addressed in the Qur'an and Hadith, the specific term itself does not appear in them. This expression is inferred from religious texts. For instance, a tradition narrates Imam Ṣādiq stating that three entities – wealth, offspring, and deeds – are represented to a dying person. Among these, the representation of one's deeds remains with them in the grave until the Day of Judgment (al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī 1985, 25: 599).

One potential function of studying near-death experiences (NDEs) is the experiential revelation of truths that emerge due to the unveiling of realities typically obscured by the strong bond between the soul and the body. If these experiences can be validated, they may serve as a powerful means of attaining certainty, akin to the experience of Prophet Abraham, whose revelation of the truths of the heavens and earth led him to profound conviction:

Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude (Q. 6:75).

Currently, near-death experiences (NDEs) have become more prevalent due to advancements in medical technology, and the widespread occurrence

of this phenomenon has garnered significant attention. The nature of these experiences remains a subject of debate among thinkers from various disciplines. Philosophers, psychiatrists, neuroscientists, religious scholars, and phenomenologists have all attempted to understand and demystify these experiences. Importantly, many aspects and themes of NDEs resonate with Qur'anic and Hadith traditions, offering valuable insights into their interpretation.

The study of NDEs dates back to the research of Raymond Moody (1975). Following the impact of his work, numerous organizations dedicated to studying this phenomenon have been established. Given the dominance of materialistic perspectives in contemporary worldviews and the recurring theme of divine guidance throughout human history, NDEs should be considered a valuable resource for understanding eschatological concepts. They warrant careful examination from the perspective of metaphysical research and require accurate explanations of their elements and components based on religious texts.

In the thought framework of Allameh Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, the principle of *ma'ād* (resurrection and the afterlife) and its associated concepts are approached through a rational and analytical lens. Challenging purely scripturalist views, he places reason and logical proof at the core of understanding revealed teachings. By constructing an interconnected network of his interpretive, anthropological, and ontological views in conjunction with his eschatological perspectives, we can address numerous ambiguities surrounding this topic.

Before delving into the discussion, it is crucial to note that individuals who have undergone near-death experiences (NDEs) often report perceptions that have been identified as common features by researchers in this field. The common elements of these experiences typically include out-of-body sensations, feelings of peace and joy, distorted sense of time, passing through a tunnel of light, a life review, a strong attraction towards a brilliant light, awareness of the conditions of other people, heightened sensory perception, a sense of being protected, encounters with deceased acquaintances, and meeting sacred figures (Moody 1975; Morse & Perry 1994; Long & Perry 2010). In this study, we aim to show that the embodiment of deeds is a prominent and almost common feature of Muslim NDEs, although it is not mentioned in the published works of the pioneers of NDE studies. The research addresses two central questions: How can the phenomenon of the embodiment of deeds in near-death perceptions, as reported by numerous Muslim experiencers, be explained through Tabataba'i's interpretation of Qur'anic verses and traditions? Can

Tabataba'i's framework validate the accounts of individuals who perceive the pleasant or unpleasant forms encountered during their NDEs as consequences and embodiments of their actions?

2. *Methodology*

This study employs a descriptive-analytical method based on data collected from interviews with over one hundred Iranian Shi'a individuals who have undergone near-death experiences (NDEs) featured in the documentary "Life after Life." Directed and researched by Dr. Abbas Mozoun, this documentary aired in four seasons from 2020 to 2023 on Channel 4 of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting and is currently available in the channel's archives. After gathering the NDE accounts, the analysis focused on identifying recurring themes and patterns regarding how deeds were embodied in these experiences. Each account was meticulously analyzed to categorize it, allowing for the creation of a typology of the embodiment of deeds in NDEs.

To answer the main questions of the study, the next phase involved a theological examination of the embodiment of deeds within the framework of Islamic theology, specifically focusing on Tabataba'i's works. This included a detailed review of his interpretations of relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadiths in his commentary, *al-Mizan*, and other writings, particularly concerning the concepts of divine reward, punishment, and the embodiment of actions in the Hereafter.

3. *Literature Review*

The literature on Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) is extensive and multifaceted, encompassing numerous perspectives and research spanning several decades. While the term "Near-Death Experience" was first introduced by Moody in 1975, similar accounts are present in the folklore of various cultures. The phenomenon was initially clinically described by Heim in 1892, with earlier isolated cases noted in the 19th century. Once considered rare, NDEs are now reported to occur in 10% to 20% of cardiac arrest survivors (Greyson 2015). Early investigations by Moody (1975) identified key features of NDEs, such as feelings of peace, out-of-body sensations, and encounters with a brilliant light. Subsequent studies by Noyes and Slymen (1979), and Ring (1980) further categorized these elements and proposed sequential stages in NDEs. Others have identified distinct types of NDEs, such as autoscopic, transcendental, or combined (Sabom 1982), as well as cognitive, affective, paranormal, or transcendental

(Greyson, 1985). Two primary theoretical frameworks have emerged to interpret NDEs: the biological/psychological hypothesis and the survivalist hypothesis. The former posits that NDEs arise from functional changes in the brain during the dying process or psychological responses to the perceived threat of death (Blackmore & Troscianko 1988; Morse et al. 1989; Blanke et al. 2004; Augustine 2007; Bokkon et al. 2013) However, NDEs, particularly those occurring during cardiac arrest or anesthesia, challenge the materialist view of the mind-brain relationship, as they involve vivid consciousness and memory formation even when brain function is severely impaired. The limitations of these models have led some researchers to explore non-reductionist explanations, proposing that NDEs may offer insights into a transcendent or mystical realm beyond the physical brain. The survivalist hypothesis suggests that consciousness may not be entirely dependent on the brain, proposing the persistence of some form of "soul" after death (Potts 2002; Greyson 2010; Thonnard et al. 2013; Greyson 2015). Hashemi et al. (2023) conducted a systematic analysis of case reports and qualitative research, categorizing NDEs into four main categories: emotional experiences (both positive and negative), cognitive experiences (heightened senses, altered perception of time, life review, sudden knowledge), spiritual and religious experiences (meeting the deceased, encountering religious figures, oneness, punishment/reward), and supernatural experiences (out-of-body experiences, metaphysical perceptions). Although the majority of near-death experiences (NDEs) are described as positive, historical accounts include terrifying deathbed visions and frightening journeys to infernal realms inhabited by malevolent entities. Assessing the frequency of these distressing or hellish NDEs is challenging, as the anxiety and judgment they provoke often discourage individuals from disclosing their experiences. Nevertheless, recent research suggests that these negative NDEs occur in approximately 11% to 22% of all cases (Greyson 2023).

In recent years, several scholars have examined NDEs from religious and philosophical perspectives. Etemadinia (2011) investigated the compatibility and interpretive capacity of eschatological propositions within Abrahamic religions in light of NDEs. He later (2013, 2018) delved into the nature of NDEs and critically analyzed various explanations for these experiences, exploring the weaknesses and challenges associated with each interpretation. Sa'i and Ghasemiannejad (2014) also contributed to the discussion by elucidating the relationship between the soul and the body by drawing on systems theory and NDEs. Farahnakian (2014), referencing Qur'anic verses and Hadiths related to the afterlife, rejected any contradiction between NDEs and Islamic teachings. He further suggested

that the content of authentic NDEs is comparable to the mystical experiences of Sufis. Falahati et al. (2019) explored NDEs from the perspective of the reincarnation hypothesis. Salarian (2020) categorizes NDEs into positive and negative types, outlining various characteristics for each.

While there is an extensive literature on NDEs and the concept of embodiment of deeds separately, none of these works have specifically examined the embodiment of deeds within the framework of NDEs.

4. *Theological Explanation of NDEs*

Reports of near-death experiences (NDEs) are not confined to a specific geographical region, culture, or historical period. The observation of similar accounts with nearly identical features from a vast number of experiencers across the globe and throughout history, where the possibility of collusion or fabrication is improbable, indicates the authenticity of the NDE phenomenon and its independence from environmental or cultural factors. Moreover, the resemblance of these experiences among individuals from diverse nations, races, cultures, and religious beliefs further strengthens the credibility of this phenomenon.

An analysis of the various characteristics of NDEs reveals that these experiences can be interpreted as corresponding to the intermediary realm of *Barzakh* in Islamic theology. A summary of Tabataba'i's views establishes the foundations and principles of the Barzakh realm, which includes features such as:

- Individual existence and the dissolution of the collective life system (1996, 2: 184; 2009, 77);
- Continuation of worldly life (2009, 90; 1996, 8: 133);
- General judgment without delving into details (2009, 92);
- A realm of preparation for the Hereafter (1996, 11: 9);
- A temporary abode (1996, 11: 8);
- Incomplete severance of material interests (2009, 96);
- The encompassing nature of the Hereafter over the Barzakh realm, and Barzakh over the worldly realm (2009, 114);
- Incomplete disappearance of means and all veils (2009, 117);
- Continued progression towards felicity or misery (1996, 8: 134);
- Formation of Barzakh objects from the actions and qualities of the human soul (2008, 2: 40);

These principles are generally present in the studied NDEs, although each experience may only depict certain aspects.

However, it cannot be definitively asserted that all experiencers were in a state of near-death or that they all reached certain levels of Barzakh. According to the Shi'a tradition and the practices of ethical and mystical scholars, it is not obligatory to die to be able to perceive and experience Barzakh. Human life has various levels. Being veiled from the Barzakh realms is inherent to the lower level of worldly life. If someone transcends this lower level in the world and reaches a higher level of existence, they can, commensurate with their life rank and perceptual capacity, become aware of and witness the Barzakh realms (Shojai 1997, 2: 192-239). It is crucial to note that, according to Islamic philosophers, the realm of existence is a reality with varying degrees of intensity and weakness (Tabataba'i 2008, 29; 2011, 41). Therefore, Barzakh, as a realm of existence, is also a reality with multiple levels. While Barzakh can be considered a single realm from one perspective, it is also viewed as multiple realms with various levels (Shojai 1997, 2: 227). The levels of perception are not equal for all individuals in Barzakh. The varying degrees of life and the unique nature of each level result in different degrees of life's manifestations, including knowledge and perception. Hence, in the Barzakh existence, each person possesses a specific level of life and its corresponding effects (Shojai 1997, 2: 186). It can be said that a person in Barzakh, depending on their degree of faith and position in the realm of human existence, acquires a certain capacity and attains a specific level within Barzakh.

Numerous spiritual devotee, by controlling their carnal desires in this world while on their journey towards God, have attained the ability to traverse the levels of Barzakh during their lifetime and simultaneously manage both realms. Barzakh observations necessitate the removal of the veil of nature and liberation from worldly attachments. In this case, these perceptions will be attained concurrently with the worldly life, whether through purposeful severance of worldly attachments or through events leading to a decrease in vital signs and near-death experiences.

In conclusion, considering the characteristics of the levels of Barzakh existence, examining the works of scholars on the Hereafter, and comparing them with the present study group, it can be concluded that NDEs, among the realms of the world, Barzakh, and the Hereafter, align with the levels of the Barzakh realm. Death leads to entry into the higher levels of Barzakh, while most NDEs, due to the incomplete separation of the soul from the physical body, represent an entry into the initial levels of Barzakh. It is worth noting that some experiencers, due to their higher aptitude or other divine purposes, have progressed to higher levels and witnessed the punishments or blessings of souls in Barzakh (Mozoun 2020-2023). Moreover, numerous examples of this kind in scholarly works on the Hereafter support this claim

(Dastgheib 1997).

5. *Types of Embodiment of Deeds in NDEs*

The NDE accounts examined in this study reveal diverse manifestations of the embodiment of deeds, narrated in various forms. Based on interviews with more than one hundred Iranian Shi'a experiencers, these experiences can be categorized into several distinct types. Notably, studies indicate that a significant aspect of the diversity and variations in the forms of NDEs is attributed to the experiencers' spiritual qualities (Tabataba'i 2008, 2: 39). Analyzing the experiencers' spiritual, personality, behavioral, and interest-related aspects leads to intriguing insights. For instance, the embodiment of a single act, such as attempted suicide, varied between two individuals. One experienced it as a scene of intense thirst, a dark whirlwind, and the torment of navigating through it, while the other perceived it as witnessing the collective cries of all graves belonging to suicide victims and the universe's distress at the arrival of a new member in this category of the deceased (Mozoun 2021, Ep. 8; 2022, Ep. 6). Undoubtedly, suicide is the result of a chain of events, predispositions, individual traits, environmental conditions, and contributing factors, each of which can play a significant role in these variations.

3.1. *Embodiment of a Significant Physical Action*

In this category, experiencers witnessed the tangible embodiment of a single salient act. These perceptions served as encouragement, admonition, or a call to attention. For example, one individual who helped resuscitate a young girl on the verge of death saw this act embodied as a girl in white attempting to assist and rescue the experiencer (Mozoun 2020, Ep. 13). Another experiencer witnessed their harsh words and sarcasm towards their spouse as a gigantic snake ready to devour them (Mozoun 2021, Ep. 25). Yet another experiencer saw their acquisition of ill-gotten wealth as creatures composed of a cow and a pig (Mozoun 2021, Ep. 30).

3.2. *Embodiment of a Spiritual Quality*

This type of experience occurred when a significant moral trait had become deeply ingrained in the experiencer, with its consequences affecting the lives of those around them. For example, an experiencer witnessed the embodiment of their anger, which had impacted their family life, as a terrifying black wolf confronting them (Mozoun 2021, Ep. 21). In analyzing these experiences, it is important to consider the true nature of human moral

qualities that have become ingrained through repetition and their manifested influence on others. The immediate creation of a visual representation of these qualities during the NDE highlights the profound impact these traits have on others.

3.3. Perception of the Consequences of an Action

Some experiencers, instead of witnessing the visual embodiment of a specific action, perceived its actual effects on the environment and creation. This category includes an experiencer who, upon watering a tree, witnessed a display of water flowing through the cells, vessels, roots, and leaves of the tree, observing their vitality and feeling a sense of unity with the tree's components (Mozoun 2020, Ep. 25). Another experiencer witnessed the prevention of a family's breakdown resulting from their act of smiling and making a child laugh whose parents were on the verge of separation (Mozoun 2021, Ep. 20). In this category, experiencers are shown the wide-ranging effects and consequences of seemingly insignificant actions. According to their descriptions, the original act transforms and branches out into other actualities, with its effects ultimately returning to the individual. These experiences offer unique messages and valuable insights from an ontological perspective and the sequential consequences of each action on the interconnected network of creation and the system of existence.

3.4. Perception of Recurring Life Events

Instead of witnessing the embodiment of their actions, this group of experiencers observed the embodiment of moments from their lives and daily actions, replaying their roles in these events. This category includes individuals of all ages, from young children to adults. They perceived a highly organized and coherent spectrum of events from birth to their final moments, in chronological order. In the sample population of this study, cases of this type are abundant (Mozoun 2020-2023).

3.5. Perception of Crucial Life Events

There was also a group among the interviewees who, instead of witnessing all the scenes of their lives, only observed the significant and prominent positive and negative events of their lives (Mozoun 2020, Ep. 31; 2021, Ep. 20).

While the latter two categories might not be considered by some as the embodiment of deeds in the traditional sense, the review of life events

accompanied by a perception of the inherent consequences of each action within the realm of existence can also be regarded as a form of embodiment of deeds. For instance, in some cases, experiencers reported witnessing the impact of their good deeds as praise and admiration from the universe. This suggests a new dimension in the understanding of the embodiment of deeds, one that focuses on the function and consequences of actions rather than solely on their visual representation.

3.6. Encountering Embodiment of One's Own Deeds or Others' Deeds

Examining over a hundred near-death experiences (NDEs) reveals a notable distinction between encounters with the embodiment of one's own actions and those involving the actions of others. From this perspective, experiencers can be categorized into two groups:

a) Experiencers whose observations were focused on the embodiment of their own actions.

b) Experiencers who were allowed to observe the embodiment of others' actions, both in divine mercy and divine wrath forms.

A noteworthy point about experiencers in group b is that the purpose of witnessing the purgatorial suffering of others was sometimes to seek forgiveness from those who were wronged or to inspire good deeds after their return to alleviate the suffering of the deceased. In other instances, observing the favorable or unfavorable conditions of an individual or group had a social dimension, conveying an important message to the experiencer and, through them, to others. For example, one experiencer witnessed numerous people in animal forms who were suffering. It was made known that they were a group of Shi'a Muslims who were undergoing suffering due to their wrongdoings until the advent of the awaited savior (Imam Mahdī) and their intercession on the Day of Judgment through his prayers (Mozoun 2023, Ep. 20).

3.7. Explaining Diversity of Deed Embodiment in NDEs

Experiencers report a wide variety of observations in their NDEs. A significant aspect of this diversity is attributed to the unique embodiment of each individual's actions. These manifestations can be either beautiful scenes resulting from good deeds or terrifying scenes stemming from actions that contradict the purpose of creation. The diversity in reported experiences is so vast that it can be argued that no two NDEs are exactly alike. This

variation is influenced by factors such as the difference in actions despite similar intentions, the experiencer's capacity for perception, and their level of spiritual development.

Moreover, analyzing the embodiments reveals a correspondence between the form and the action. For instance, a wrathful disposition aligns with the ferocious nature of a wolf. The hybrid creature composed of a pig and a cow, due to the pig's impurity and the cow's permissibility as food, can symbolize wealth that is a combination of both lawful and unlawful. Similarly, encountering a viper after making sarcastic remarks to one's spouse reflects the association between hurtful words and the viper's venomous bite.

6. Theological Analysis of the Embodiment of Deeds in NDEs

The nature of the recompense for one's actions has always been a central theme in discussions of the afterlife (*ma'ād*) in Islamic theology. Reexamining how the Qur'an and Hadith portray this concept can offer valuable ontological insights. The embodiment of deeds refers to the manifestation of the inner reality of one's actions. While there is ample evidence in the Qur'an and Hadith supporting this concept, some scholars, like al-Majlisī (1954), argue against its possibility based on certain theological premises. However, with the availability of NDE accounts, expressions in the Qur'an and Hadith that depict the consequences of actions in metaphorical terms become clearer. For instance, the Qur'an describes consuming the wealth of orphans as ingesting fire into the bellies (Q. 4:10) and backbiting others as eating the flesh of dead brother (Q. 49:12). Similarly, some narrations describe looking lustfully at someone as being struck by a poisoned arrow from Satan (Ibn Bābawayh 1985, 1: 264) and fasting as a shield against the fire of hell (Ibn Bābawayh, 1985, 1: 51).

As explained in the previous section, in the interviews conducted by Mozoun with NDErs over years of research and fieldwork, the embodiment of deeds is frequently observed among the experiencers. This finding illuminates the veracity of the doctrine of the embodiment of deeds found in the Qur'an and hadiths for contemporary audiences. NDEs offer a spectrum of insights into the consequences of one's actions. A common perspective views individual actions as solely originating from, related to, and directed towards oneself. However, the experiential evidence from NDEs challenges this notion and suggests a more intricate framework. Based on interviews with experiencers, several insightful propositions related to anthropology,

ontology, and theology can be extracted from NDEs.

6.1. Ontological Statements

In exploring the embodiment of deeds within the context of NDEs, we find that these experiences provide profound insights into the nature of actions and their consequences. The ontological statements presented here emphasize the intrinsic relationship between actions and their effects, highlighting that every action carries significance beyond its immediate context:

- Every action has an effect. Neither the action itself disappears, nor do its effects. Human actions and their consequences have an inherently formative relationship.
- Angels and agents exist who reveal the actions and accompany the experiencer in reviewing their actions or their effects. These could be the angels who record deeds.
- The effects of actions, from the moment they are performed to the future when they persist, are the responsibility of the doer and will be revealed to them.
- Every action, regardless of its size, is evaluated in relation to those who are connected to and affected by it.
- Existence is a coherent, unified whole, with a genuine connection among all its parts. An individual action can involve multiple layers of those connected to it within the interconnected fabric of existence; its far-reaching effects can permeate the entire universe, ultimately returning to the doer. For instance, activities such as planting a sapling or watering a tree can have profound effects on the environment, the health and vitality of the local community, and even extend to future generations.
- The benefits and harms of our good deeds and sins go beyond the apparent weight of the actions. In this regard, one must understand the unified system of existence. Sometimes the reflection of a seemingly minor act, such as immodesty or a lustful glance, penetrates deep into the core of existence in a chain reaction.

6.2. Anthropological Statements

This section explores anthropological statements derived from NDEs, highlighting the impact of actions on family and community, emotional perceptions of good and evil, and the complexities of intercession and action visualization:

- If a trait or action has had a profound effect on the experiencer's family and immediate relatives in the present or past, it is visualized more prominently for them.
- Intense spiritual perceptions of the good or evil of actions and the ability to understand them emotionally from the perspective of those affected by the action are noteworthy in many of these experiences.
- The partial or complete lack of perception by some experiencers regarding the individual scenes, situations, and conditions they have been in, in relation to the visualization of actions is evident in some reports.
- The concept of the nullification of actions exists in some NDEs, but for certain reasons, it is not frequently observed, which is a point worth investigating.
- In the relationship between intercession and the manifestation of actions in NDEs, it can be said that since the action and the soul are interconnected, the intercession of one individual (the intercessor) on behalf of another (the one being interceded for) and their shared attributes may have a greater impact than intercession based solely on actions and personal characteristics. In this situation, the stronger influence (intercession) can prevail over the weaker influence (the manifestation of the action), and the negative manifestation of an action in Barzakh can be negated through intercession (Asadi et al. 2024).

6.3. Theological Statements

This section explores the theological insights gained from near-death experiences (NDEs):

- In NDEs, the wrongdoings of the experiencers are often highlighted more than their good deeds. The function of this is to compensate for and abandon negative traits and actions. It can be explained within the tradition of guidance and the attribute of divine mercy.
- Confrontation with the visualization of others' actions is for the purpose of seeking forgiveness for the deceased, or for admonition and learning a lesson. Thus it cannot be considered contrary to the divine attribute of concealing.
- The preservation of the details of life and all human actions with great accuracy indicates the attribute of being the Preserver and the infinite power of God Almighty.
- The system of reward and punishment is based on justice because, instead of conventional and symbolic substitutes, the action itself is given to its doer, and the individual judges the effects and results of their

own actions. They perceive the attribute of divine justice in its complete manifestation.

- Contemplation on NDEs provides an understanding of the beautiful names of God. The attributes of mercy, power, knowledge, justice, forgiveness, guidance, and preservation are among the divine attributes that are manifested in this way for the experiencer intuitively, and for those to whom these reports are conveyed, through acquisition.

7. *Embodiment of Deeds from Tabataba'i's Viewpoint*

Tabataba'i, in various parts of his commentary, al-Mizan, under the verses related to the recompense of deeds in the Hereafter, has discussed the embodiment of deeds. In one of his discussions, Tabataba'i presents two aspects regarding the system of deeds and the divine law of reward and punishment: the embodiment of actions for their doer and the granting of recompense and reward to humans. He explains that there is no contradiction between these two aspects, each of which is supported by specific Qur'anic verses. According to his interpretation, God has created Paradise and Hell as rewards and punishments for His servants, and they are already prepared and existing. A veil, however, currently conceals them, which will be lifted after death. Simultaneously, based on verses related to the embodiment of actions, our deeds in the Hereafter manifest as heavenly blessings or hellish torment. Thus, the fact that Paradise and Hell exist now, as stated in some verses, and the idea that they are the creations and outcomes of human actions, as mentioned in other verses, do not conflict with each other (Tabataba'i 1996, 1: 645). To substantiate this notion, Tabataba'i cites verses such as:

Indeed those who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and sell it for a paltry gain they do not take in, into their bellies, [anything] except fire ... (Q. 2:174).

Indeed those who consume the property of orphans wrongfully, only ingest fire into their bellies, and soon they will enter the Blaze (Q. 4:10).

The day when every soul will find present whatever good it has done; and as to whatever evil it has done. It will wish there were a far distance between it and itself (Q. 3:30).

Tabataba'i (1996, 1: 646) considers the verse Q. 3:30 to indicate the presence of the good and evil deed before its doer. The wish for temporal distance between the sinner and their deed further signifies the presence of the action in the sinner's presence. He believes that even if there were no other verses, a single verse, Q. 50:22, would suffice to prove the

embodiment of actions:

You were certainly oblivious of this. We have removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today (Q. 50:22).

Moreover, in interpreting the verse Q. 17:13, Tabataba'i (1996, 13: 73) explains that the term imposing the collar refers to making the deed an inseparable part of the doer, and the term neck emphasizes this inseparability. Thus, the verse illustrates that, according to God's law, every action remains with its doer, and its good or evil consequences ultimately revert to the individual:

We have attached every person's omen to his neck, and We shall bring it out for him on the Day of Resurrection as a wide open book that he will encounter (Q.17:13).

Tabataba'i (1996, 13: 75) further discusses the second sentence in verse Q. 17:13, emphasizing the concealed nature of actions in the earthly realm and their revelations in the Hereafter. By referencing Q. 3:30, he concludes that the record mentioned in Q. 17:13 relates to actions presented to humans in a manner where denial becomes impossible, as direct observation serves as the strongest evidence.

In moral philosophy, the reciprocal relationship between action and the soul is well-established. Every action performed by an individual leaves an imprint on the soul. If the initial impact is fleeting, it constitutes a temporary state. However, if it becomes ingrained through prolonged repetition, it transforms into a disposition (*malakah*) and remains embedded in the soul for a longer duration. With intensification, these dispositions merge with the essence of the soul, becoming part of its existential substance and ultimately transforming into a purgatorial form. Beatific forms lead to the individual's bliss, while wretched forms result in their torment (Tabataba'i 1996, 1: 277).

Moreover, Tabataba'i (2009, 87 & 157) references narrations that indicate the manifestation of deeds during the stages of dying and the grave to support the phenomenon of embodiment of deeds. He considers the narrations that describe the embodiment of fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and other acts of worship and sins in specific forms corresponding to their realities as numerous and beyond count.

6. Conclusion

This paper explores the profound and multifaceted concept of the embodiment of deeds as encountered in Near-Death Experiences (NDEs)

and the theological reflections on this phenomenon. Drawing from more than a hundred NDE accounts, we identified various types of embodiment, from embodiment of significant actions and spiritual qualities to perception of recurring life events and the far-reaching consequences of one's deeds. These embodied manifestations suggest that human actions, whether physical, spiritual, or emotional, are not merely ephemeral but take on tangible forms that persist beyond the earthly realm.

Through theological analysis, particularly through the lens of Allameh Tabataba'i's interpretation of Qur'anic verses and Hadith, we find that the embodiment of deeds is deeply rooted in Islamic eschatology. Tabataba'i's reflections underscore that deeds are inseparably tied to the soul, ultimately manifesting as forms consistent with the reality of the deeds. His integration of moral philosophy highlights how repeated actions become ingrained dispositions, shaping the soul and determining the nature of one's eternal existence.

NDEs, therefore, offer valuable experiential insights into the spiritual truth conveyed by religious teachings, revealing that actions, both good and bad, resonate beyond this life, influencing not only the doer but the interconnected web of existence. This paper thus illuminates the ontological and theological dimensions of human responsibility, suggesting that the embodiment of deeds is an essential part of the metaphysical structure of the afterlife and a crucial aspect of divine justice.

Acknowledgements

This article is derived from Fatemeh Asadi's PhD dissertation, completed under the supervision of Dr. Kamal Sahraei Ardakani and Dr. Ahmad Zare Zardini at Meybod University. The authors extend their gratitude to the university's Research Deputy for providing the facilities and resources essential to this study.

We also wish to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Abbas Mozoun, whose documentary series "Life After Life" served as a foundational resource for this research. His extensive fieldwork and interviews with individuals who experienced Near-Death Experiences (NDEs) have resulted in a rich collection of accounts that significantly contributed to the depth and scope of this study.

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