

## **Death Metaphor in Religious Texts: A Cognitive Semantics Approach**

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### **Abstract**

**It seems that a great number of abstract religious concepts in Islamic texts are realized, both conceptually and linguistically, through cognitive strategies like metaphor and metonymy. This article tries to study the concept of death in the Holy Qurān, and Nahjul-Balāgha, the main Islamic Texts, to see how this (relatively) abstract concept is conceptualized in mind? Moreover, what component (s) of the recognized source concepts is (are) mapped onto the concept of death? The analysis of linguistic expressions about death shows that death is realized both metonymically and metaphorically in these two texts. There are structural, orientational and ontological metaphors in which death is the target domain of conceptualization, of which personification is more influential and specific than others. In all recognized metaphors, the death target is understood through different, but homogeneous, source concepts. The common component of nearly all these sources which is mapped on and highlighted is death power. Death has control over human and nobody can run away from it.**

**Keywords: Religious Language; the Holy Qurān, Nahjul-Balāgha; Conceptual Metaphor; Personification; Mapping; Highlighting.**

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## Introduction

It seems that there are a great number of abstract religious concepts in Islamic texts, which may be conceptualized through cognitive strategies like metaphor and metonymy. However, we are going to focus on the concepts of *death* as the target domain. Although much research has investigated conceptual metaphors both in literary and ordinary languages, little attention has been paid to metaphors in religious texts. This article tends to study concept of DEATH, in the Holy Qur' n, and Nahjul-Bal gha, the main Islamic Texts, to see how this (relatively) abstract concept is conceptualized? Moreover, what component(s) of the recognized source concepts is (are) mapped onto the concept of death?

In the next section, we would have an overview of the Cognitive Metaphor Theory in general and definition of metaphor and metonym from this perspective. Having introduced three functions of metaphors, metaphorical personification would be explained more. Some background studies related to religious language and texts will be presented afterwards. The data contracted from the Holy Qur' n, and Nahjul-Bal gha

will be presented in detail. Although the original texts are in Arabic, and their translations in English are used, translated expressions are not the base of argumentation and Arabic terms and expressions will be presented as linguistic metaphors. This is due to the fact that in some cases, there seems to be little metaphorical equivalence of the recognized expressions. Finally, there would be a discussion on the relationship between metaphors and what is highlighted in the process of mapping source domains onto the death concept.

## Definitions

**Metaphor** has traditionally been viewed as the most important form of **figurative language** use, and is usually seen as reaching its most sophisticated forms in literary or poetic language (Saeed, 1997: 302). For over 2000 years, metaphor was studied within the discipline known as **rhetoric**. Within this approach, metaphor was characterized by the schematic form: A is B, as in *Achilles is a lion*. As a consequence, metaphor has been identified since the time of Aristotle with implicit comparison (Evans & Green, 2006:293).

However, in cognitive semantics, metaphor is seen as an important mode of thinking and talking about the world (Saeed, 1997: 304). Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another (Lakoff and Turner, 1989:135). Examples of this include when we talk and think about life in terms of journeys, about arguments in terms of wars, about love in terms of journeys, and many others. A convenient shorthand way of capturing this view of metaphor is the following: **CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN A IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN B**, which is what is called a **conceptual metaphor**. A conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. Conceptual metaphors are distinguished from **metaphorical linguistic expressions**. The latter are the words or other linguistic expressions that come from the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the **source domain**, while the conceptual domain that

is understood this way is the **target domain**.

Kövecses (2010: 37) believes that when we ask what the function of metaphor is for ordinary people in thinking about and seeing the world, we're asking a question about the cognitive function of metaphor. For the purposes of a clearer exposition, conceptual metaphors can be classified according to the cognitive functions that they perform. On this basis, three general kinds of conceptual metaphor have been distinguished. Lakoff and Johnson (1981:295) proposed a threefold distinction between **orientational**, **ontological** (physical) and **structural** metaphors. These kinds of metaphor often coincide in particular cases.

Kövecses (2010:37) expresses that in structural metaphors, the source domain provides a relatively rich knowledge structure for the target concept. In other words, the cognitive function of these metaphors is to enable speakers to understand target A by means of the structure of source B. He suggests that this understanding takes place by means of conceptual mappings between elements of A and elements of B. As an example of structural metaphor, he explains the

conceptualization of death and life. According to Kövecses (2010: 26) the metaphorical conceptualization of life and death are pervasive in both everyday language and literary works. Life is understood as a journey to some destination. Moreover, it is metaphorically day, light, warmth, and others. Birth is conceived of as arrival, whereas death is viewed as departure, as well as night, darkness, and cold. In the expressions "The baby will *arrive* soon", "Grandpa is *gone*" and "His father *passed away*" such a conceptualization is evident.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), ontological metaphors enable us to view immaterial phenomena as physical objects. They confer "entity or substance status" on concepts that are not intrinsically entities or substances. The authors cite events and ideas as concepts that do not intrinsically have entity status (Quoted in: Haser, 1973:144)

Ontological metaphors provide much less cognitive structuring for target concepts than structural ones do. Their cognitive job seems to be to merely give a new ontological status to general categories of abstract target concepts and to bring about new abstract entities. What this

means is that we conceive of our experiences in terms of objects, substances, and containers, in general, without specifying exactly what kind of object, substance, and container is meant. Since our knowledge about objects, substances, and containers is rather limited at this general level, we cannot use these highly general categories to understand much about target domains. This is the job of structural metaphors, which provide an elaborate structure for abstract concepts. (Kövecses, 2010:38)

Three types of ontological metaphors are distinguished in cognitive metaphor theory. The first is **entity (or substance) metaphor**. A typical example of an entity metaphor is the metaphorical concept INFLATION IS AN ENTITY, which is instantiated in expressions such as *Inflation makes me sick* and *If there is much more inflation, we will never survive*. Examples of container metaphors include STATES ARE CONTAINERS (*He is in love, we are out of trouble now*). Finally, personification is the third type of ontological metaphors. A case in point is the conceptual metaphor FACTS ARE PERSONS, instantiated in expressions such as *"This fact argues*

against the standard theories" (Haser, 1973:144).

Kövecses (2010: 39) shows that "in personification, human qualities are given to nonhuman entities. Personification is common in literature, but it is also abound in everyday discourse, as the examples below show:

*His theory explained to me the behavior of chickens raised in factories.*

*Life has cheated me.*

*Inflation is eating up our profits.*

*Cancer finally caught up with him.*

*The computer went dead on me.*

Theory, life, inflation, cancer, and computer are not humans, but they are given qualities of human beings, such as explaining, cheating, eating, catching up, and dying. In personifying nonhumans as humans, we can begin to understand them better "(Kövecses, 2010:39).

Lakoff and Turner (1989: 15-17) argue that death is personified in different ways, for example as *grim reaper*, as *someone trying to catch* you, as *a warrior* battling you, as *a beast* trying to devour you, or your *opponent* in a chess match or as *a destroyer*. Some of these personifications derive from another conceptual metaphor. For example, DEATH AS GRIM REAPOR metaphor is

derived or related to the structural metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS. That is, the personification of death as grim reaper exists by virtue of the PEOPLE ARE PLANT metaphor, in which people are plants which are harvested by the reaper. In western poetry, there are many metaphorical personifications of death which are derived from the same small number of basic conceptual metaphors, like:

*Man that is born of woman..... cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down. (Job 14: 1-2).*

According to Lakoff and Turner (1989: 17) the structures of the basic metaphors provide the roles which can serve as the sources of personifications. This meant that no separate personification metaphor is needed to account for these cases, and it also explains why the personifications of death are all either minions to assist one to a final destination, or to agents who cause death, or both.

The specific death personification metaphor, including DEATH IS A DEVOURER, DEATH IS A REOPER, and DEATH IS A DESTROYER inherit structures from a more schematic metaphor which Lakoff and Turner (1989) call a generic level metaphor: EVENTS ARE

ACTIONS (or INANIMATE PHENOMENA ARE HUMAN AGENTS) (Evans and Green, 2006:302).

An important idea in Conceptual Metaphor Theory relates to **hiding** and **highlighting**. Evans and Green (2006:303) believe that "when a target is structured in terms of a particular source, this highlights certain aspects of the target while simultaneously hiding other aspects". Death metaphors focus on, or highlight, a number of the aspects of death. For example in the personification of death in western literary works, metaphors focus on different aspects of death: death as some factotum whose job is to assist the traveler and affect death, it may be an enemy one fight against. In DEATH IS SLEEP metaphor, the inactiveness and inattentiveness of the corpse is highlighted. In DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor, the onset of dying is concentrated on.

Another property of metaphorical mappings is that speakers tend to use only some aspects of a source domain in understanding a target. Although in highlighting, it was shown that the focus of a source on a target is partial, Kövecses (2010:93) shows that only a part of a source is used for highlighting. This process is

called the partial **metaphorical utilization**. Lakoff and Turner (1989: 18) argue that Life and death are such all-encompassing concepts that we need many different conceptual tools for understanding and reasoning about them. There are a number of basic metaphors for comprehending life and death, and each of these metaphors focuses on different aspects, highlighting or downloading the, and giving rise to different inferences, which often conflict.

Another cognitive process which is very influential in cognitive semantics studies is metonymy. In **cognitive metonymy**, one kind of entity stands for another kind of entity. The entity that direct attention, or provide mental access to another entity is called the **vehicle** entity, and the kind of entity to which attention, or mental access is provided is **target** entity. For example in "*Im reading Shakespeare*", "*Shakespeare*" is the vehicle, and "*Shakespeare's work*" is the target. Kövecses (2010:173) defines metonymy in this way:

Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or idealized cognitive model (ICM)." Many studies have shown that

certain metonymic relationships form the basis of many metaphors.

Generally speaking, metaphor and metonymy have been shown "to be rooted in human bodily experience and interaction with the environment, a property that is often referred to as **embodiment**. For instance, humans use experientially grounded **image schemata** such as the 'container schema' or the 'path schema' as the basis for the creation of numerous conceptual metaphors and metonymies (Klaus-Uwe and Thornburg, 2009:3).

### **Background**

Metaphorical concepts like our view of God and our relationship to God, eternity, life after and before death, and so on are key aspects of religion which are necessarily metaphorical, since we have no sensual experience of them. Religious language refers to written and spoken language typically used by religious believers when they talk about their religious beliefs and their religious experiences. The term also covers the language used in sacred texts and in worship and prayer (Harrison, 2007:127-128). It seems that little investigations have been done on the metaphorical expressions of religious and sacred texts of Islam.

Mohamed Shokr Abdulmoneim (2006:100) explains the linguistic creativity of the Qur'n through applying the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor to religious metaphor "LIFE IS A JOURNEY". He believes that the domain of religion should be largely dependent on metaphorical conceptualization. He reasons that this is due to the fact that it is not only a highly abstract domain quite removed from sensual experience, but also its central issues of "God", "the soul", "the hereafter", and the freedom of moral choice" have traditionally been regarded as the metaphysical ideas.

He found that life in Qur'n is conceptualized as an endless journey in which death is only one of the stages of trip. The basic metaphor "LIFE AS JOURNEY" is a point of departure in the Qur'n as certain novel metaphors are created from it. This metaphor is based on dichotomy where there are two kinds of life: the good, moral life on one hand versus the bad, immoral life on the other hand, two paths: the Straight Paths; God's way or the good way, and the crooked path with its evil ways, two kinds of travelers: the righteous and the wicked, and finally, two attitudes and ways of acting adopted by God regarding the role

of a guide and a misleader at the same time. (ibid: 129).

Pourebrahim (1388), in her dissertation on metaphors in the Holy Qur' n, demonstrated that some religious abstract concepts are personified according to CMT s principles. Consider the following evidence from the Holy Qur' n, in which CONJECTURE (zann) is personified:

*And most of them do not follow anything but conjecture (zann). Certainly conjecture cannot avail them against the Truth, All h is well aware of all that they do. (Y nus: 36).*

Moreover, Golfam and his colleagues (2008) in their study on KNOWING IS SEEING Metaphor in Qur' n found that this religious text reflects the abstract meaning of Knowledge of God through mapping certain aspects and traits of visual concepts in the source domain:

*[O, Messenger!] Have you thought about him ( seen him) who disputed [out of pride] with Ibr h m about his Creator and Nurturer.... (surah 2: verse 258) (2008:91).*

### Method

The following data are extracted from two major sacred written texts of Islam: the Holy Qur' n and Nahjul-Bal gha. The Holy

Qur' n has been introduced to mankind as the Final Message of All h, the Almighty God and the Messenger of it as the last of all the Messengers. It contains 114 S rah (Qur' nic section) each one containing Words of Revelation ( y t). Nahjul-Bal gha, meaning "the style of eloquence", is the written and spoken words of Imam Ali, successor to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This sacred book is collected by Sharif Razi in Arabic. The translator rendered it from one of the Persian translations by Mohsen Farsi. The evidences are of the first chapter of the book, namely: Sermons and Recommendations.

Having recognized metaphorical expressions or linguistic metaphors (focuses) of the sacred texts, the lexical items denoting human body, actions and features, things, entities and events used for embodiment of DEATH have been chosen. Since the religious texts are in Arabic and their translations in English may not be metaphorical, both English and Arabic expressions will be presented. The Arabic lexical items, enclosed in parentheses, are metaphorical focuses and are transcribed and (if necessary) translated. Metaphorical concepts are capitalized and metaphorical expressions are italicized.

### Conceptual Metonymy of Death

We begin with recognizing and exemplifying conceptual metonymies of death. Then, we characterize the status of death in the structural metaphor "LIFE IS A JOURNEY" and provide some explanations on its universal and religious-specific aspects. Conceptual personifications, as the most salient and prevalent ontological metaphors of these texts, will be provided next. At the end, entity or substance metaphors related to death target would be dealt with.

In the following Words of Revelation and Sermons, the lexical items "maut", "ajal", "man n", means "death". However, there are other lexical items, meaning the time or time of death, or a feature of death stand for death. Consider the following examples in which "s 'ata" and "yaum", meaning "time" and "day" respectively, are metonymically used for "death":

- 1- *and death will drive you (as-s 'ata tahd -kum) toward your destiny (Sermon 29: 24).*
- 2- *I swear by God that my last day of life which I hope will come( j a yaumi) soon will remove (la-yufarriqan-na) me from among you (Sermon 234:180)*

The promised day or "mow ud" is another temporal lexical item for representing the concept of death:

- 3- *... until death (al-mau' d) came to them and swallowed them, the same death that leaves no room for apology or repentance and brings torture and severity with it (Sermon 182:133)*

In the expressions above, time of death event stands for death itself. This suggests that in this metonymy, one entity or thing is used to indicate, or to provide mental access to another entity. In this THE TIME FOR THE EVENT metonymy, TIME is the vehicle concept and DEATH is the target. Now, consider another sentence in Nahjul-Bal gha. Here, the concept "makh f", meaning "dreadful and horrible", indicates "death":

- 4- *Suppose that death has knocked at your door (nazala bik-kum makh f-u) (Sermon 249:199)*

Dreadful is a property of death, so it is part of the category of death. "A defining or essential property of a category may evoke, and stand for, the category that it defines, for example, "blacks" for "black people" (Kövecses, 2010: 181). The essential property of death, from peoples perspective, is its being frightening and dreadful. So,

this feature can evoke the DEATH concept in peoples mind.

There is another different sentence in which death is not a target like the sentences above, but a vehicle to indicate fatal aspect of battle:

5- *The moment that fighting becomes intense, and death is near you from every quarter... (istaharr-al-maut) (Sermon 47: 35).*

The specific metonymy of DEATH FOR BATTLE underlies "istaharr-al-maut". This sentence literally means: the death become hot. The metonymic relationship between death and battle is the generic metonymy RESULT FOR ACTION. In other words, fighting may result in death and death stands for battle and fighting. In this metonymy the result of an action stands for the action itself.

### **Death is Departure/ Death is A Stage of Journey**

When we study Islamic texts, it appears that the structural metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY with its religious-based variations, extends over all the texts and understanding nearly all aspects of religious messages is somehow related and dependent on its conceptualization. We are

going to find the role of death in this metaphor. Read the following Sermon of Imam Ali in which death is leaving this transient world and travelling to another world,

6- *O God s servants, don't show affection to this **transient world** which you have no wish to **leave**, and do not get attached to this life which wears out your body and petrifies it. Your **stay** in this world is not long and stable, and no creature has lived or will live eternally in it. You are like **travelers** covering a way that ends somewhere for you **to descend** as you should. (Sermon115:83).*

People are travelers (**ban sab lin**) and they are forced to leave (**irtih l**):

7- *Perhaps you have forgotten that this house is not a place to stay in, and you must **leave** it soon or late (va antum **ban sab lin** 'al safarin min d rin laisat bi-d ri-kum ,va qad zintum min-h **bil -ertih l**).(Sermon 238: 186)*

In the above examples, path schema underlies metaphorical concepts of death. There is one example in which the world is conceptualized as container and death is going out of it, and entering the hereafter world:

8- Muhammad departed (*kharaja*) this world without benefitting from it, and went to the next one pure and uncontaminated. (Sermon 206: 152)

Death is a person in the way who calls human and derives them toward their destiny:

9- and death will drive you (*as-s 'ata tahd -kum=death calls you*) toward your destiny (Sermon 29: 24)

Or, it is a destination toward which people are driven or pulled by an unknown force or by the world as a person:

10- You looks dejected and distressed as if you are facing death (*yus q na il-al-maut*) (Sermon 54: 40)

11- You must go toward death one day (*al-ajalu mas q-un- nafs*) (literally: death is where you tends to go) (Sermon 185: 133)

12- Between each person and heaven or hell there is no other distance but death (Sermon 76: 51).

### Death as Human

It seems that personification of DEATH is a common and prevalent metaphor in religious texts. The lexical items "maut", "ajal", "man n", meaning "death", in the following Words of Revelation and Sermon

are used with metaphorical expressions like "see" and "come"; as though death can "come", and "see" and performs many other actions like a human being. DEATH AS HUMAN is a generic metaphor in the first part of the evidences, though later, it seems that they would change to more specific metaphors, through which more precise and specific mappings between the source domain of HUMAN and the target domain of DEATH take place.

13- And you were longing for death [After *Badr*], before you *met it (talq -hu= met him)* [in *Uhod*]; now that you have *seen it (ra'aytumuhu)* with your own eyes, you are only beholding (*tanzur n*). ( *l-e Imr n:143*)

In evidence (13), the lexical item (*talq -hu*) is a metaphorical expression and the pronoun "-hu" is a masculine third person singular, referring to death. DEATH AS HUMAN metaphor underlies the following linguistic metaphors too:

14- Even when death *overtakes (j 'a = comes to)* the disbelieving mammonish, he says: *O, my creator! Send me back,* (Al-Mo minun-99).

15- Wherever you people may be, death will *overtake you (yudrik-kum = see you, join you)*, even if you are in the

well-built fortresses...(An-Niss a: 78).

16- And every nation has its fixed term; when **their term appears** (*j a ajalahum*= their death comes), they cannot put it back or forward even for an hour(*Al-A r f*: 34).

17- Go forward to meet death, and do not wait for its arrival.(*va l tantazir qud mahu*) (Sermon 254:221)

18- You have said: "Are these excuses to avoid death?" By God, I swear that I have no fear of going towards death (*daxal-tu ila- al-mowt*), and if **death comes** (*kharaj –al-maut-u ilai*) to me I never fear it. ( Sermon 68:47).

Death appears to humans and ends their wishes:

19- One of the wonders is that as soon as someone is on the point embracing his cherished wish, he is suddenly faced with death (*fa-yaqti‘u-hu huz ru-jali-hi*- the presence of his mow break the wishes off)( Sermon141:104).

### Death is a Caller/ Death is a Camel Driver

Sometimes, death is realized as somebody who calls out people to move and leave the world:

20- Death has knocked at his door (*al-*

*maut-u yatlubu-hu*= the death wants/calls him out) (Sermon115:83)

"D ‘iya" is somebody who calls people and "h diya" is the camel driver or the singer of camel caravan who gathers camels to leave out. In the following Sermon, death is personified and conceptualized as somebody who calls out people to quickly leave this world. PEOPLE ARE CAMELS is a structural metaphor, related to DEATH IS A CAMEL DRIVER.

21- And that is that death which is calling on anyone, ends his life and before allowing him to prepare himself for departure to the next world, quickly buries him under hips of earth. (*va m huwa il-l al-mowt-u asma‘a d ‘ye-hi va a‘jala - h d yi-hi*) (Sermon161:131)

### Death is a Seeker

In the following evidences, death comes, seeks people and finally finds them:

22- Death is a seeker that is a finder (*inn-al- maut-u t lib-un- hathithun* =quick seeker)(Sermon 151:112).

### Death is an Uninvited Guest

23- Death is a morose and severe guest (*z ïr*). (Sermon 289:253).

### Death is an Opponent

[DEATH] is an invincible **opponent** (*qirn*).  
(Sermon 289:253).

### Death is a Competitor

Get the lead over death by good deeds (**b dir j li-kum bi-a'm li-kum**)(Sermon 249:199).

### Death is a Captor

24- It **wraps** (*a'laqat-kum*) the cords of its trap round your legs. (Sermon 289:253).

DEATH is understood as a person to whom humans are handed over:

25- The moment death suddenly **arrives** (*j à*), indeed the links of the chainmail will be broken, and I will be **handed over to death**. (*aslanta-ni*) (number 74: 50)

26- Say [O, Messenger!]: "if you are **running away from** (*fir r*) death or being killed. You will have a very little time to enjoy life...(Al-Ahz b:16).

### Death is a Guilty

27- It is a **guilty** (*v tir*) one which leaves no trace of itself, and never pays its indemnity of its guilt. (Sermon 289:253).

### Death is a Killer

However, death kills humans like a beast:

28- Always think that death (*al-man yya*) has its **claws at your throat** (*a'liqat-kum makh lib*) (Sermon 96:65)

In the following piece of 68<sup>th</sup> Sermons of Imam Ali, DEATH is conceptualized specifically as an arrow of a warrior fighting against human:

29- O people, in this world you are the target of **death s arrows!** (*gharaz-un tantazil fi-hi al-man y*) (Sermon 179:145).

### Death is an Entity

Abstract concepts may be conceptualized as things or relations. Now we can observe that the abstract concept DEATH is conceptualized as something that causes difficulty and agony and mortality:

30- Whenever I invite you to crusade against the enemy, your eyes bulge with terror as if **death is at your throat**. (*min-al-mauti- fi ghamratin*) (Sermon 47:35).

31- And eventually **the agony of death** (*sakrat-ul-maut*) which is true comes to man and he will be told: "This is the thing that you tried to escape from (*min-ho tahid*), all your life." (*Q f:19*).

Sometimes, DEATH is realized as a fatal drink:

32- He tried to overcome him and quenched him with **the cup of death**. (yasqi s hiba-hu kaš- ul- man n) (Sermon 69:48).

Death is realized as a destructive liquid penetrating in human body:

33- Death gradually encircles them and puts an end to their haggling (**al maut-u azdada f-him vol j**) (Sermon 133:96).

Death is also a destructive arrow:

34- It brings down the living with **the arrow of death** (yarmi al-hayya bil-maut) (Sermon 141:104)

### Death in War is Something Red

35- Soon your people will suffer hunger and meet **red death**. (sermon 102, page 86: number 119)

Oriental metaphors of the Holy Qur' n are investigated by Pourebrahim, et al. (2009: 79). They found that POWER IS UP and WEAKNESS IS DOWN in the Holy Qur' n. The sentences above exhibited that DEATH is more powerful than human beings. This systematic coherence between personification of DEATH and orientatiional metaphor is demonstrated in the following sentences:

Death is located over us like a cloud with its shadows and dominates over men:

36- Death is so near your life that it seems to have soared its shadow over your heads (**azalla-kum**) (Sermon 76:50)

And, this dreadful and horrible thing may descend from heaven:

37- Suppose that death has knocked at your door **nazala bi-kum makh f-u** (Sermon 249:199).

### Conclusion

Death is such an all-encompassing matter that there can be no single conceptual metaphor that will enable us to comprehend it. In religious texts of the Holy Qur' n and NAhjul-Bal gha, there is a multiplicity of metaphors for the conceptualization of death. However, these superficially various domain, have share some coherent mappings. In other words, in theses texts, two aspects of death are bolded. The first is the transient nature of life and consequently the role of death in this transitivity; and the second is its dreadfulness.

It seems that, at least, two metonymies provide cognitive basis for conceptualization of death:

1. THE TIME OF DEATH FOR DEATH
2. DEFINING PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY (BEING TERRIBLE FOR DEATH)

However, in order to study metaphorical sources of DEATH conceptualization, in the Holy Qur'an, and Nahjul-Balgha, the main Islamic Texts, and see how this (relatively) abstract concept is conceptualized, we categorized and explained its main sources of conceptualization. It was found that death is realized as "PERSON", "ENTITY" or "THING" and "STAGE OF LIFE JOURNEY". Figure 1 below shows the sources:

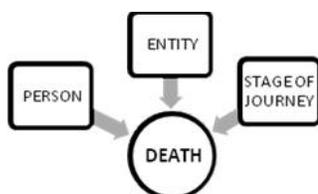


Fig. 1 Source Domains of Death

#### A- Journey Metaphor

In Death-as- a Stage of Journey, we understand that there is no end in religious texts to the journey of life. People are travelers who had to leave this world and travel to another world. In most English literary works, like in Dickenson poems (c.f. Lakoff and Turner, 1989: 7) DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION. In Islamic texts, life extends to another world after death, and death is not the end of life's journey. A PATH schema underlies

the journey metaphor. People are travelers along the paths of the life. However an interesting point about death stage of the life is that it is not optional. Every person is forced to move and travel to hereafter. So, in death conceptualization, the FORCE schema is also involved.

Among personifications, DEATH IS A CALLER, or DEATH IS A CAMEL DRIVER are two journeys related ones. Death calls people to leave their house and move to another world. Camel driver is the leader of caravan, somebody who gathers the camels and their drivers (caravan) to leave toward another stage of journey. Death is conceptualized as somebody who gathers people and force them to travel to another world. A structural related metaphor seems to be PEOPLE ARE CAMELS. This is a cultural specific metaphor, rooted in the geographical and ecological aspects of travelling across Hijaz deserts. The highlighted aspect of this metaphor is the controlling power of camel drivers over these passive, domestic animals.

#### B- Entity Metaphor

Moreover, entity metaphors of death are used in several sentences. For example,

death is an arrow, death is a fatal drinking, death in war is something red. In all of them, death is conceptualized as a destructive and fatal entity. This DAETH IS A FATAL ENTITY corresponds with DEATH AS A HUMAN. What is highlighted here, is fatality and destruction of death.

### C- Personification

In the same way, in almost all metaphorical personifications of death, it is realized as a human who seeks people to find them, captures or arrest them, who is a guilty and murderer. All of these personifications highlight the power and control of death over people. These metaphors are the most influential and widespread ontological metaphor in Nahjul-Bal gha. People in the Age of Imam Ali were mostly disobedient Muslims, who did not follow the Only God. Using theses metaphors enable Imam Ali to frighten them.

What is highlighted in the mappings from different sources onto the target domain of is the controlling power and dominance of death, and weakness, passiveness of humans. This highlighted component of death is obvious in all of the above mentioned metaphors, even in

DEATH AS A STAGE OF JOURNEY, in which humans are conceptualized as animals forced to go to another destination, and in the only orientational metaphor: DEATH IS UP. Both in the Holy Qur' n and in Nahjul-Bal gha, death descends from heaven, and since POWER IS UP, death is conceptualized as an upper entity.

In sum, the study of linguistic expressions about death shows that death is realized both metonymically and metaphorically in these two texts. There are structural, orientational and ontological metaphor of personification is more influential and specific than others. In all recognized metaphors, death target is understood through different, but homogeneous, source concepts. The common component of nearly all these sources which is mapped on and highlighted is death power. Death has control over human and nobody can run away from it.

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## استعاره مرگ در متون مذهبی: رویکرد معنی شناسی شناختی

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به نظر می‌رسد که شمار زیادی از مفاهیم انتزاعی دینی در متون اسلامی به صورت مفهومی و زبانی، از طریق ابزارهای شناختی استعاره و مجاز درک شوند. این مقاله به مطالعه مفهوم مرگ در زبان قرآن کریم و نهج البلاغه می‌پردازد. هدف از این مقاله بررسی مفهوم انتزاعی مرگ در این متون مهم اسلامی است تا مشخص شود این مفهوم چگونه در ذهن مفهوم سازی می‌شود و نیز اینکه از میان حوزه‌های مبدأ عینی‌ای که به مفهوم سازی مرگ کمک می‌کنند، چه مولفه‌هایی بر روی حوزه مقصد مرگ منطبق می‌شوند و در فرایند الگوبرداری برجسته می‌شوند. بررسی عبارات زبانی حاوی مرگ نشان می‌دهد که این مفهوم، در هر دو متن، به صورت استعاری و مجازی درک می‌شود. استعاره‌های ساختاری، جهت‌ی و وجودی در این متون یافت شدند که در آنها مرگ حوزه مقصد است. از آن میان، استعاره شخصیت بخشی نقش مهمتری را نسبت به سایرین دارا است. در تمام استعاره‌های موجود، حوزه مقصد مرگ با کمک حوزه‌های مبدأ متنوع و در عین حال منسجم، درک می‌شود. مولفه مشترکی که از این حوزه‌های مبدأ بر حوزه مقصد مرگ الگوبرداری می‌شود «قدرت» مرگ است. مرگ در تمام این استعاره‌ها قدرتمند تر از انسان است و انسان قادر به گریختن از آن نیست.

کلید واژگان: زبان مذهبی، قرآن کریم، نهج البلاغه، استعاره مفهومی، شخصیت بخشی، الگوبرداری،

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