

**ISLAM AND ECOLOGY: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN THE QUR'AN**

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**Abstract**

The ecological crisis of the modern world calls for a profound reassessment of the relationship between humans and nature. Islam—being a morally and spiritually comprehensive system—offers a balanced worldview that integrates ecological responsibility with faith and practice. In the Qur'an, nature is not portrayed as a mere resource created for human exploitation; rather, it is described as a divine sign (ayah) that reflects Allah's wisdom, order, and mercy. This article analyzes the approach to environmental ethics in the Qur'an, with particular focus on the concepts of human stewardship (khilafah), balance (mizan), and moderation (wasatiyyah). The study also explores prophetic traditions promoting ecological consciousness and reviews modern Islamic environmental movements. By linking theological foundations with contemporary ecological necessities, the research highlights Islam's potential contribution to global discussions on sustainability and environmental justice.

**Keywords:** Islam, ecology, Qur'an, environmental ethics, khilafah, sustainability, mizan, wasatiyyah.

**Introduction**

The 21st century has become an era of ecological tension for humanity. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution, and soil degradation have emerged as global concerns. These problems affect not only the material world but also the psyche, moral values, and social life of human beings. Therefore, beyond environmental policies alone, there is a growing need to approach ecological crises from a moral and spiritual perspective, integrating Islamic ethical principles with ecological awareness.

Attention to religion–nature relations is increasing in other worldviews as well. For instance, the United Nations Environment Programme's *Faith for Earth Initiative* (2021) conducted extensive research on the role of religions in environmental protection and in strengthening ecological responsibility.<sup>1</sup> It concluded that religious teachings can play a significant role in shaping ecological consciousness and cultivating responsible attitudes toward nature.

In Islam, the Qur'an and Hadith provide profound ethical principles regarding the relationship between humans and the natural world. Some essential aspects include:

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Environment Programme Faith for Earth Initiative Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2 (2022)



- In the Qur'an, Allah grants humankind the status of *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth, thereby entrusting them with responsibility toward nature.<sup>2</sup>
  - Human-induced corruption and environmental degradation are described as manifestations of *fasad* (disorder, destruction) on earth.<sup>3</sup>
  - F. Khalid, in *Islam and the Environment*, outlines strategies and practical measures to encourage ecological responsibility in Muslim communities.<sup>4</sup>
  - Ibrahim Özdemir, in *The Ethical Dimension of Human Attitude Towards Nature*, elaborates on the ethical foundations of human–nature relations.<sup>5</sup>
  - M. Foltz, in *Environmental Ethics in Islam*, provides a theoretical analysis of Islamic environmental ethics and compares them with contemporary environmental theories.<sup>6</sup>
- Thus, this article aims to examine the theoretical foundations of Islamic environmental ethics, analyze the ecological worldview presented in the Qur'an and Hadith, and propose Islamic ethical approaches to addressing modern environmental challenges.

### Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the essence of environmental ethics in Islamic teachings, examine the concept of ecological responsibility as reflected in the Qur'an and Hadith, and identify the possibilities of applying these principles to address contemporary environmental challenges. The research aims to conceptualize the ethical foundations related to ecology found in Islamic sources and contribute to the development of an Islamic ecological paradigm. This approach supports not only religious values but also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by promoting ecological awareness and responsible stewardship.

### Main Section

#### *Environmental Examples and Guidance in the Qur'an and Hadith* *Examples from the Qur'an.*

Surah Al-Baqarah 2:30 states that Allah granted Adam the status of *khalifah* (vicegerent) on earth, assigning humanity great responsibility in its interaction with nature.<sup>7</sup>

Surah Ar-Rum 30:41 emphasizes that corruption (*fasad*) on earth results from human actions, indicating that ecological problems are consequences of human behavior.

The Qur'an contains numerous verses calling for balance (*mizan*), moderation, and protection of

<sup>2</sup> Obaideen K, Alnidawi IS. Earth and the Environment: Islam and Stewardship. In: Aboul-Enein BH, Rassool GH, Benajiba N, Bernstein J, Faris ME, eds. *Contemporary Islamic Perspectives in Public Health*. Cambridge University Press; 2025:112-117.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad, M., Nurul Yaqin, M. Z., Reza Mahfud, F. K., & Alahmadi, F. M. S. (2024). Freedom that is not Absolute: Ecological Ethics and Human-Nature Relationship in the Qur'an. *Studia Ecologiae Et Bioethicae*, 22(4), 17–27. <https://doi.org/10.21697/seb.5821>

<sup>4</sup> Islam and the Environment Fazlun M Khalid Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Birmingham, UK [https://islam-science.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Islam-and-the-Environment.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://islam-science.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Islam-and-the-Environment.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>5</sup> Özdemir, İ. (1996). *The ethical dimension of human attitude towards nature* [Ph.D. - Doctoral Program]. Middle East Technical University.

<sup>6</sup> Foltz, R. (2010). *Environmental ethics in Islam*. State University of New York Press. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/islamecologybest0000unse>

<sup>7</sup> Al-Damkhi, Ali. (2008). Environmental ethics in Islam: Principles, violations, and future perspectives. *International Journal of Environmental Studies*. 65. 11-31. 10.1080/00207230701859724.



the natural order, such as Surah Al-A'raf 7:31, which warns against excess and wastefulness. These verses serve as moral guidance, encouraging humans to preserve environmental balance, avoid destruction, and treat nature responsibly.

*Examples from the Hadith.*

In Sahih al-Bukhari, in the “Book of Agriculture,” Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encourages planting trees, irrigation, and the protection of property — all pointing to the necessity of harmonious interaction with nature.<sup>8</sup>

In Sunan Ibn Majah (Hadith No. 425), Muslims are advised not to waste water, even when abundant — illustrating early Islamic teachings on resource conservation.<sup>9</sup>

Other hadith collections also highlight themes such as careful use of natural resources, kind treatment of animals, and responsible agricultural practices.

**Contemporary Environmental Problems and Islamic Perspectives on Solutions**

**Are environmental problems a conflict between religion and nature?** Modern environmental crises — climate change, air and water pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, waste accumulation, and overconsumption — disrupt the balance between humans and nature. Climate-induced drought, shifting rainfall patterns, and negative impacts on agriculture are among the global challenges that resonate with Qur’anic warnings about human-caused corruption on earth.

**Islamic solutions**

- The *Faith for Earth Initiative* (UNEP, 2021) serves as a global platform connecting religion and environmental protection, engaging faith communities in ecological action.<sup>10</sup>
- *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*, developed by ISESCO and other Islamic institutions, integrates Qur’anic ecological principles into modern environmental policy frameworks.<sup>11</sup>
- In agriculture, Islamic concepts support agroecology, conservation agriculture, and traditional *hima* protected areas.
- Green mosque initiatives, water-saving practices, waste reduction policies, and sustainable energy projects can be implemented within Muslim communities.
- In economics, Islamic principles encourage responsible consumption, fair distribution, and environmental stewardship, offering an alternative to excessive materialism.

Through a dialogue between Islamic sources and modern ecological needs, Muslim societies can develop policies promoting environmental protection and sustainable development.

**Conclusion**

Islamic teachings view the relationship between humans and nature not merely as a material interaction but as a moral and spiritual responsibility. Qur’anic verses and Hadith emphasize

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, Early Islamic philosophy.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Islamic\\_philosophy?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Islamic_philosophy?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>9</sup> Khalid, Fazlun. (2010). Islam and the Environment – Ethics and Practice an Assessment. Religion Compass. 4. 10.1111/j.1749-8171.2010.00249.x.

<sup>10</sup> Ali, Dr & Agushi, Dr. (2024). Eco-Islam: Integrating Islamic Ethics into Environmental Policy for Sustainable Living. International Journal of Religion. 5. 949-957. 10.61707/gq0we205.

<sup>11</sup> UNEP Faith for Earth & ICESCO. (2022). *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* [PDF]. United Nations Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/al-mizan-covenant-earth>



humans as *khalīfah* — stewards of the earth — tasked with preserving the environment, maintaining balance, and avoiding wastefulness. Nature is regarded as a divine blessing, and protecting it is considered part of faith.

The study finds that Islamic environmental ethics rest on three fundamental concepts: *khalīfah* (stewardship), *amānah* (trust), and *mīzān* (balance). These principles guide human activities in all fields — production, agriculture, consumption, and urbanization — towards sustainability. Prophetic traditions offer practical guidance for environmental protection, such as planting trees, conserving water, showing kindness to animals, and avoiding excessive waste. In the context of today's ecological crisis, reviving these values has become essential. Human-driven environmental degradation aligns with the Qur'anic concept of *fasad*, making Islamic environmental teachings relevant as a moral framework for addressing global ecological challenges.

The study demonstrates that Islamic environmental ethics complement the objectives of the United Nations *Faith for Earth Initiative* (UNEP, 2021). The ISESCO (2018) *Islamic Guidelines on Sustainable Development* further advance these ideas toward practical policy implementation. Ultimately, Islamic ecology does not separate humans from nature but views them as part of a divine order. The Qur'an-based environmental ethic offers a pathway to a sustainable, just, and spiritually balanced life — not only for Muslims but for all humanity.

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10. United Nations Environment Programme Faith for Earth Initiative Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2 (2022) Wikipedia, Early Islamic philosophy. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Islamic\\_philosophy?utm\\_source=](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Islamic_philosophy?utm_source=)

