

## Heavenly Ecotheology: Qur'anic Jannah Verses as the Foundation of an Islamic Environmental Ethics

Didik Andriawan

Universitas Islam Tribakti Lirboyo Kediri

didikandriawan@gmail.com

### Abstract

The global environmental crisis demands an ethical framework capable of integrating spiritual values with ecological responsibility. Within the Islamic tradition, Qur'anic descriptions of paradise (al-jannah)—as depicted in Q.S. Muhammad 47:15, Al-Baqarah 2:25, Ar-Rahman 55:46–78, and Al-Insan 76:13–14—consistently present an ideal ecological landscape characterized by pristine water, lush vegetation, diverse fruits, and a serene, harmonious climate. This study responds to the urgent need to reinterpret these verses through an ecotheological lens in order to construct a foundation for an Islamic environmental ethic relevant to contemporary ecological challenges. The objectives of this research are: (1) to analyze the representation of ecological elements in the Qur'anic verses on jannah, (2) to examine classical and modern exegetical perspectives on these descriptions, and (3) to formulate principles of Islamic ecological ethics derived from the “paradisaal ecology” model. Employing a library-based methodology, the study combines thematic analysis of the relevant verses with a comparative examination of major exegetical works, including those of al-Tabari, al-Qurthubi, Fakhrudin al-Razi, and Quraish Shihab. The findings indicate that the Qur'anic portrayal of jannah reflects an ideal ecosystem grounded in principles of sustainability: purity of water, biodiversity, continuous regeneration, climatic balance, and the absence of corruption (*fasād*). Exegetes affirm that these depictions are not merely eschatological promises but symbolic expressions of cosmic order and ecological well-being that mirror divine intent. The study concludes that the verses on jannah provide a viable foundation for an Islamic environmental ethic emphasizing human responsibility to preserve the Earth as a reflection of the ideal ecological order. The proposed “Paradisaal Ecotheology” model offers a new paradigm for fostering environmental awareness and sustainable practice within Muslim societies.

**Keywords:** Ecotheology of Paradise, Islamic Environmental Ethics, Jannah, Ecological Exegesis, Sustainability.

### Introduction

The global ecological crisis—ranging from air and water pollution, land degradation, biodiversity loss, to the increasing threat of freshwater scarcity—has emerged as an urgent issue requiring multidisciplinary approaches, including religious and theological inquiry (Shaleh & Islam, 2024). Within the Islamic tradition, environmental ethics have long been grounded in theological concepts such as *khalīfah*, *amānah*, *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs*, all of which

emphasize human responsibility in ensuring the sustainability of the earth (Pratama et al., 2025). However, Qur'anic ecological studies have thus far concentrated primarily on verses addressing the prohibition of corruption (*ifsād*) and the obligation to protect the earth, while the eschatological sources—particularly the Qur'anic depictions of Paradise (*jannah*)—remain largely unexplored as potential ethical resources.

Yet, the Qur'anic descriptions of Paradise are rich with ecological elements: pristine water, flowing rivers, fertile gardens, lush trees, diverse fruits, and an atmosphere characterized by shade, balance, and tranquility. These ecological narratives should not be understood merely as eschatological promises; they can also be read as portrayals of an ideal ecological order that embodies harmony, sustainability, and cosmic balance. This raises the central questions of the present study: How do Qur'anic Paradise verses envision ecological well-being? What ecotheological principles can be derived from them? And to what extent can these images be reformulated as a foundation for contemporary Islamic environmental ethics? In other words, this study seeks to analyze Paradise verses through an ecotheological lens, identify the ecological ethical principles embedded within them, and construct a model of Islamic environmental ethics grounded in constructive eschatological narratives.

The urgency of this study lies in its novelty. Existing literature in Qur'anic environmental exegesis predominantly focuses on verses of “warning” related to environmental destruction, while the “aspirational” verses depicting the ecological richness of Paradise have rarely been examined as potential ethical frameworks. By proposing the concept of “Paradise as a Model of Ideal Ecology,” this study opens new horizons in Islamic ecotheological discourse and offers a fresh conceptual contribution to sustainability studies rooted in sacred texts.

The development of ecotheology within Islamic studies draws upon Seyyed Hossein Nasr's notion of sacred nature (Nasr, 1996), Izzi Dien's analysis of Islamic environmental ethics, and the emerging framework of *Fiqh al-Bi'ah*, which positions ecological balance as intrinsic to the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Within this paradigm, humans are regarded as *khalīfah* entrusted with the duty of caring for the earth, and ecological action is understood as both *tazkiyah* and a form of social worship. The broader literature on Islamic ecology highlights the significance of water, vegetation, and biodiversity as described in the Qur'an, framing them not only as signs of divine power but also as guidance for environmental stewardship.

In the context of Paradise exegesis, classical tafsir works such as those by al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī portray *jannah* as a perfect ecological realm that embodies pleasure, balance, and fertility. Contemporary commentators such as Quraish Shihab and Sahiron Syamsuddin extend this interpretation by viewing Paradise descriptions as symbols of cosmic order that should inspire ecological responsibility in earthly life. Nevertheless, no existing studies have explicitly conceptualized Paradise verses as an ecological blueprint for modern sustainability. This gap is precisely what the present research seeks to address.

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative library-research approach, deriving all data from Qur'anic texts, classical and contemporary exegesis, and relevant eco-theological literature. The main method used is thematic exegesis (*tafsīr maudhu'ī*), which gathers Qur'anic verses describing Paradise (*jannah*) and examines their connections within the broader theme of ecology and Islamic environmental ethics. This is complemented by an eco-theological

framework that reads sacred texts through the lens of spiritual–ecological relations, enabling eschatological descriptions to function as ethical ecological guidance.

The primary data consist of Qur’anic verses with ecological elements—such as al-Baqarah 2:25, Muhammad 47:15, al-Rahman 55:46–78, and al-Insan 76:13–14—depicting water, gardens, rivers, trees, shade, and fruit. Secondary data include interpretations from classical tafsir (al-Tabari, al-Qurṭubī, Fakhruddin al-Rāzī) and modern scholars like Quraish Shihab, as well as contemporary ecological thought (e.g., Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fiqh al-Bī’ah).

The analysis uses thematic coding by grouping each verse according to ecological components (water systems, vegetation, biodiversity, shade, climatic stability). An eco-theological reading is then applied to identify principles of environmental ethics—such as sustainability, balance (mīzān), ecological welfare, and earth preservation (ḥifẓ al-bī’ah). This process produces a conceptual mapping that positions the Qur’anic portrayal of Paradise not only as an eschatological vision but also as an ideal ecological model capable of informing contemporary Islamic environmental ethics.

## Results

### Analysis of Qur’anic Verses on Paradise

A thematic analysis of Qur’anic descriptions of Paradise reveals that *jannah* is portrayed as an ecosystem defined by pure water, fertile gardens, flourishing trees, and continuously bearing fruits. Q.S. Muhammad 47:15 depicts Paradise as having “*rivers of water unchanging, milk unchanged in taste, wine delightful, and honey purified*” (مَاءٍ غَيْرٍ آسِنٍ ... عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى). Al-Ṭabarī explains that these rivers represent perfect ecological purity—water that never decays, milk and honey produced without biological impurities, and wine devoid of intoxicating harm.

Q.S. Al-Baqarah 2:25 affirms that believers will receive “*gardens beneath which rivers flow*” (جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ). Al-Qurṭubī emphasizes that these rivers flow freely on the surface of Paradise, guided directly by divine command—an image of a perfectly regulated hydrological system.

Selections from Ar-Rahman 55:46–68 describe Paradise as having *two gardens, abundant branches* (ذَوَاتَا أَفْتَانٍ), and “*every kind of fruit, two kinds*” (مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ رُؤْجَانٍ). According to al-Qurṭubī, these fruits symbolize ecological abundance and flawless quality; even fruits that are bitter on earth become perfectly sweet in Paradise.

Q.S. Al-Insan 76:13–14 further describes its climate: “*no scorching sun nor bitter cold... and its shades brought near, and its fruit clusters lowered*” (لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمَهْرِيرًا... وَذُلَّتْ) (فُطُوفُهَا). Al-Rāzī interprets this as a depiction of perfect climatic equilibrium, where shade exists without sunlight and fruits are effortlessly accessible, eliminating all ecological hardship.

Collectively, these verses present Paradise as an environment characterized by climatic balance, pure and stable water systems, abundant vegetation, and non-degradative material qualities. Elements such as *ghayr āsin* water, surface-flowing rivers, *dhawātā afnān*, and fruits lowered for ease construct a vision of an ecological ideal that stands in complete contrast to the instability, entropy, and degradative tendencies of the earthly world (*dunyā*). Thus, the Qur’anic portrayal of Paradise reflects a pristine, harmonious ecosystem shaped by divine order.

### Principles of Ecotheology in the Qur’anic Descriptions of Paradise

A thematic mapping of Qur’anic verses describing Paradise (Jannah) reveals three foundational principles of Islamic ecotheology that transcend the physical limitations of the worldly realm. The first principle, ecological purity, is articulated explicitly through the

depiction of water and other rivers in Q.S. Muhammad 47:15. This verse presents rivers possessing non-degradative qualities—such as *mā' ghayri āsinin* (water that neither spoils nor emits odor), milk whose taste never changes, and *'asal muṣaffā* (clarified honey)—underscoring an absolute purity of matter unbound by the cycles of decay inherent to the world. This purity is further emphasized by the unique hydrological system governed directly by *qudrat ilāhī*, where rivers flow upon the surface without channels or trenches (*akhādīd*), as indicated in Al-Baqarah 2:25. Such depictions highlight a boundless clarity, beauty, and immaculateness.

The second principle, regeneration and sustainability, is reflected in Paradise's ever-abundant flora—*dhawātā afnān* (lush, branching trees) and fruits whose clusters (*quṭūf*) are always within reach, as expressed by *dhullilat tadhliyilā* in Al-Insan 76:14. The perpetual availability of these resources—free from depletion, ecological fatigue, or degradation—presents an entirely self-sustaining, divinely maintained environment, contrasting sharply with the finite and vulnerable ecosystems of the earthly domain.

The third principle, cosmic balance (*mīzān*), is manifested fully in the elimination of climatic extremes, as described in Q.S. Al-Insan 76:13: *lā yarawna fihā syamsan wa lā zamharīrā* (they will see neither scorching heat nor bitter cold). This equilibrium reflects a perfect harmony among natural elements, wherein instability and entropy are wholly absent. In this eschatological depiction, every component of Jannah—ranging from colossal, seedless fruits to pristine waters—embodies an idealized counter-ecology. Within this framework, Paradise functions as the complete antithesis of environmental degradation and instability characteristic of the *dunyā*. Therefore, these descriptions signify that Jannah is not merely a realm of reward but also a model of an ideal ecosystem in which *mīzān* is preserved through transcendent wisdom.

### **Paradise as an Ecological Blueprint for Earth**

The textual findings indicate that the Qur'anic depiction of Jannah presents an ideal ecological structure that can serve as a conceptual model for environmental management on Earth, especially with regard to water conservation, greening initiatives, and biodiversity protection. This approach frames Paradise as an eschatological-normative prototype offering the highest ethical standard for human interaction with nature.

The principle of Ecological Purity in Paradise provides a central blueprint for water conservation and resource governance. Q.S. Muhammad 47:15—through its description of *mā' ghayri āsinin* and *'asal muṣaffā*—establishes a normative ideal of unpolluted, non-degraded water quality for earthly environmental ethics. Theologically, it obliges humans to exert maximum effort in preventing pollution and maintaining the purity of water sources, analogously reflecting how Paradise's rivers operate under divine governance without contamination or degradation (*akhādīd*).

Furthermore, the principles of regeneration and sustainability as well as cosmic balance (*mīzān*) offer conceptual direction for reforestation efforts and biodiversity protection. The portrayal of Jannah as an ecosystem characterized by *dhawātā afnān* and unceasingly accessible fruits (*quṭūf*) represents an optimally productive environment free from waste (zero waste). This imagery inspires ecological mandates for humans as *khalīfah* to invest in sustainable agriculture and ensure the quality, resilience, and continuity of Earth's species (biodiversity).

The perfect climate of Paradise—free from extreme heat or cold (*lā yarawna fihā syamsan wa lā zamharīrā*)—becomes an ethical aspiration for achieving ecological stability on

Earth. Thus, Jannah serves as a paradigmatic counter-ecology, reminding humanity that its fundamental task is to uphold *mīzān* by ensuring that Earth's ecosystems, to the greatest extent possible, reflect the purity, harmony, and stability articulated in the Qur'anic descriptions of the eschatological realm.

## DISCUSSION

### Jannah as a Normative Ecological Model

The Qur'anic depiction of Paradise (Jannah) as a stable and flourishing ecosystem indicates that the sacred text places the environment as an integral spiritual and ethical dimension of human life. Jannah is not merely an eschatological promise; it functions as a representation of ecological values that stand in stark contrast to the environmental degradation occurring on Earth. Accordingly, Jannah serves as a normative ethical model for humans in constructing a clean, balanced, and harmonious environmental order.

The normative role of Jannah is rooted in the principle of *Tawhīd* (Divine Oneness), wherein the purity and harmony of the paradisiacal environment reflect the unity and perfection of its Creator (Nasr, 1996, p. 115). This absolute harmony—manifested in elements such as *ghairi āsinīn* waters, non-degrading fruits, and an environment free from climatic extremes (Q. Al-Insān 76:13)—embodies the Qur'anic concept of *Mīzān* (Cosmic Balance). Thus, Jannah operates as an eschatological blueprint that provides humans with ideal parameters for ecological conduct, setting purity and stability as the highest ethical telos in environmental management.

Functionally, the ecological model of Jannah stands as a critique of the current state of the Earth. As a paradigm of *counter-ecology*, it presents a complete antithesis to worldly entropy and instability. The perfection of its systems—such as the divinely regulated hydrological mechanisms (as noted by Qurtubī) and the perpetual abundance of flora (*dhawātā afnān*)—provides a normative guide for the human vocation of *Khilāfah* (vicegerency) on Earth (Khalid, 2003). As *khalīfah*, humans bear an ethical responsibility to protect the Earth, maintain climate stability, and conserve water and biodiversity. Human failure to uphold these responsibilities results in ecological degradation that starkly contrasts with the divine perfection promised in the Hereafter. Drawing from classical exegesis (Ṭabarī, Rāzī), the portrayal of Jannah underscores that environmental *islāh* (restoration) is a spiritual duty aimed at reflecting—however imperfectly—the transcendent balance of the afterlife.

### Principles of Ecotheology as a Framework for Islamic Environmental Ethics

The principles derived from Qur'anic descriptions of Jannah—ecological purity, regeneration and sustainability, and *mīzān*—demonstrate that the Qur'an provides a robust theoretical basis for Islamic ecotheology. These principles affirm that sustainability is not merely a technical matter but an inherent part of Islamic theological teachings. The cosmic balance (*mīzān*) evident in the imagery of Paradise positions humans as participants within the ecosystem rather than as its absolute rulers. Through the lens of ecotheology, the Qur'anic portrayal of Jannah reinforces the human role as *khalīfah*, whose mission is to protect rather than dominate nature (Khalid, 2003).

When read ecotheologically, the paradisiacal descriptions serve as a normative and prescriptive foundation for Islamic environmental ethics. Their normative dimension lies in establishing Jannah as an ideal ecological blueprint—a model of counter-ecology—where

absolute purity (*ghayri āsinīn*) and perpetual sustainability are goals to be pursued on Earth. Its prescriptive force arises from the implicit command to reject all forms of environmental corruption (*fasād*), which fundamentally contradict the *mīzān* ordained by God. This perspective harmonizes worship with conservation, framing ecological stewardship as an expression of *Tawhīd*, which views the natural world as an integrated unity under one Creator (Nasr, 1996).

### **Transforming the Imagery of Paradise into Ecological Ethics and Practice**

Recognizing that the Qur'an embeds normative ecological values within its descriptions of Jannah allows these eschatological narratives to be translated into practical frameworks for sustainability on Earth. The imagery shifts from doctrinal description to ethical inspiration. For example, the idealized rivers of Jannah—*ghayri āsinīn* and *muṣaffā*—prescriptively encourage the protection of clean and sustainable water systems, emphasizing pollution prevention and resource conservation (Khalid, 2003). Likewise, the Qur'anic imagery of gardens with *dhawātā afnān* and ever-accessible fruits (*quṭūf*) provides a model for greening initiatives, agroforestry, and sustainable agriculture oriented toward optimal productivity and minimal waste.

The paradisiacal abundance of flora also reinforces the necessity of biodiversity preservation as a spiritual appreciation of God's creation. In practical terms, educational institutions and eco-pesantren can integrate the narrative of Jannah as a primary source for Qur'anic ecological ethics, merging spiritual consciousness with environmental responsibility. Through this integration, sustainability becomes inseparable from *tawhīd*, embedding ecological care within the core of Islamic spiritual life (Nasr, 1996).

### **Conclusion**

This study asserts that the Qur'anic descriptions of Paradise (al-Jannah)—particularly in Q.S. Muhammad 47:15, Ar-Rahman 55:46–78, and Al-Insan 76:13–14—are not merely eschatological promises but constitute a representation of a rich and stable ideal ecological model. The thematic and exegetical analysis demonstrates that Jannah is structured upon three fundamental ecotheological principles: ecological purity (expressed through *ghayri āsinīn* water and non-degradative materials), regeneration and sustainability (reflected in ever-present fruits and divinely regulated flowing waters), and cosmic balance (*Mīzān*) (manifested in a climate free from extremities). Classical (al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī) and modern exegeses affirm that this perfection serves as the complete antithesis to worldly entropy and environmental degradation (*fasād*). The proposed model—"Paradise as an Ideal Ecological Paradigm"—functions as a normative blueprint for contemporary Islamic Environmental Ethics. It positions the human role as *khalīfah* (God's representative on earth) as one that is obligated to mirror the purity and *Mīzān* of Paradise. Prescriptively, the Qur'anic narrative of Jannah can be translated into practical applications such as sustainable water management, long-term greening initiatives, and biodiversity strengthening, particularly within educational and policy contexts. By integrating Paradise's hopeful eschatological imagery into ecological discourse, this study concludes that a Paradise-centered Ecotheology provides a strong spiritual foundation for environmental awareness and long-term ecological commitment within Muslim communities.

### **References**

- Khalid, F. (2003). Islam and the Environment: A Foundational Principle. Dalam R. C. Foltz, F. M. Denny, & A. Baharuddin (Eds.), *Islam and ecology: A bestowed trust* (hlm. 165–183). Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School.
- Nasr, S. H. (1996). *Religion and the Order of Nature*. Oxford University Press.
- Pratama, Y., Nasrullah, F., & Sidiq, F. A. (2025). Pelestarian Lingkungan Dalam QS. Al-A'raf Ayat 56 Perspektif Tafsir Maqshidi. *Wahyain: Journal of Quranic Sociology and Hadith*, 1(2), 1–17.
- Qurtubī, M. bin A. al- (1384 H). *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah.
- Rāzī, A. 'Abd A. M. ibn 'Umar ibn al-Ḥusayn F. al-Dīn al- (1420 H). *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (3rd ed., Vols. 1–32). Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.
- Shaleh, A., & Islam, M. S. (2024). Averting the Existential Threat of the Planet: Islamic Environmental Ethics to Address the Contemporary Environmental Crisis. *Intellectual Discourse*, 32(1). <https://doi.org/10.31436/id.v32i1.1937>
- Ṭabarī, A. J. M. b. J. al- (1420 H). *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān* (1st ed., Vols. 1–24). Mu'assasah al-Risālah.