

The Philosophy of Mountains in the Qur'an and Its Lessons on Stability, Resilience, and Environmental Ethics

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Abstract: The Qur'an presents mountains not only as geological formations but as profound symbols of cosmic balance (*mīzān*), spiritual resilience, and divine wisdom. This study examines their philosophical significance by integrating classical and modern Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) with contemporary environmental ethics and scientific perspectives. Employing a qualitative approach with thematic and comparative tafsir analysis, this research explores Qur'anic references to mountains (*jabal*, *rawāsi*, *tūr*) through interpretations by Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Al-Razi, and M. Quraish Shihab. Findings indicate that mountains function as both stabilizers of the earth and metaphors for human endurance, patience, and revelation. Their Qur'anic depiction aligns with the concept of *mīzān* (divine balance), illustrating the interconnectedness between natural order and moral responsibility. Additionally, the study emphasizes human stewardship (*khalīfah fil ard'*) and ethical responsibility toward nature, drawing links between Islamic teachings and contemporary sustainability discourse. By bridging scriptural interpretation with ecological thought, this study underscores how the Qur'anic philosophy of mountains provides ethical insights into environmental conservation.

Keywords: *Qur'an, mountains, cosmic balance (mīzān), environmental ethics*

Abstrak: Al-Qur'an tidak hanya menggambarkan gunung sebagai formasi geologis, tetapi juga sebagai simbol keseimbangan kosmis (*mīzān*), ketahanan spiritual, dan kebijaksanaan ilahi. Studi ini mengeksplorasi makna filosofis gunung dengan mengintegrasikan tafsir klasik dan modern serta menghubungkannya dengan etika lingkungan Islam dan perspektif ilmiah kontemporer. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis tafsir tematik dan komparatif, penelitian ini menelaah ayat-ayat yang merujuk pada gunung (*jabal*, *rawāsi*, *tūr*) berdasarkan interpretasi Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Al-Razi, dan M. Quraish Shihab. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gunung berfungsi sebagai stabilisator bumi sekaligus metafora bagi keteguhan manusia, kesabaran, serta tempat turunnya wahyu. Dalam perspektif Al-Qur'an, gunung menggambarkan konsep *mīzān* (keseimbangan ilahi), yang menegaskan keterkaitan antara tatanan alam dan tanggung jawab moral manusia. Lebih jauh, penelitian ini menyoroti peran manusia sebagai *khalīfah fil ard'* (pemegang amanah di bumi) serta pentingnya interaksi yang berkelanjutan dan etis dengan alam, menghubungkan ajaran Islam dengan diskursus keberlanjutan lingkungan. Dengan menjembatani tafsir Al-Qur'an dan pemikiran ekologi modern, studi ini menegaskan bahwa filosofi gunung dalam Al-Qur'an dapat memberikan wawasan etis dalam upaya pelestarian lingkungan.

Kata kunci: *Qur'an, gunung, keseimbangan kosmis (mīzān), etika lingkungan*

Introduction

Mountains are among the most significant natural formations on Earth, playing a fundamental role in maintaining ecological balance and serving as a source of life for various ecosystems.¹ In the Qur'an, mountains are frequently mentioned as symbols of strength, stability, and divine wisdom.² More than just geological structures, they are depicted as essential elements that uphold the earth, demonstrate God's greatness, and provide moral and spiritual lessons for humanity.³ The Qur'anic descriptions of mountains emphasize both their physical and metaphysical functions, illustrating their role in maintaining natural equilibrium while also serving as a source of reflection on patience, perseverance, and faith. The presence of mountains in prophetic narratives further reinforces their significance as places of divine revelation and human spiritual elevation.⁴ However, despite the frequent references to mountains in the Qur'an, their deeper philosophical meanings—particularly in relation to human responsibility, resilience, and environmental ethics—have yet to be comprehensively explored.

Existing studies have examined the role of mountains in the Qur'an from multiple perspectives. Some studies explore the physical and symbolic dimensions of mountains, emphasizing their role in stabilizing the earth while also serving as a reflection of God's majesty and a sign of divine power, as highlighted in various Qur'anic interpretations and scientific perspectives.⁵ Another study emphasizes the ecological significance of mountains in maintaining biodiversity, stabilizing ecosystems, and sustaining life. This includes their roles in regulating water flow, serving as biodiversity hotspots, and

¹ Lin Zhang and Jinniu Wang, "Mountain Biodiversity, Species Distribution and Ecosystem Functioning in a Changing World," *Diversity* 15, no. 7 (June 22, 2023): 799, <https://doi.org/10.3390/d15070799>; Gebrekidan Worku Tefera, Ram L. Ray, and Amare Bantider, "Exploring the Unique Biophysical Characteristics and Ecosystem Services of Mountains: A Review," *Journal of Mountain Science* 21, no. 11 (November 13, 2024): 3584–97, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11629-024-8828-0>.

² Mohamed Akhiruddin Ibrahim, "MOUNTAINS AS STABILIZERS FOR EARTH FROM THE QURANIC AND MODERN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVES," *IJASOS- International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences* 5, no. 15 (December 29, 2019): 1287–92, <https://doi.org/10.18769/ijasos.592092>.

³ Z El-Naggar, *The Geological Concept of Mountains in the Quran* (Al-Falah Foundation, 2003).

⁴ Edwin Bernbaum, "The Spiritual and Cultural Importance of Mountains," 2022, 213–24, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13298-8_12; Jinghua Huang, Chujing Yang, and Si Chen, "Spatial Imagination in Sacred Narratives of Mountain Communities in Western Yunnan, China," *Religions* 15, no. 3 (March 21, 2024): 382, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030382>.

⁵ Mahmud Rifaannudin, "Manfaat Tumbuhan Dalam Al Qur'an Bagi Kesehatan (Pendekatan Tafsir Ilmi)," *Al-Muhafidz* 2, no. 1 (2022): 87–100; Rendy Pradana et al., "GUNUNG DALAM TAFSIR ILMI (ANALISIS MELALUI PENDEKATAN GEOGRAFI)," *Jurnal Al-Mubarak: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 9, no. 2 (December 2024): 35–49, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47435/al-mubarak.v7i1>.

providing vital ecosystem services that are crucial for ecological balance.⁶ Furthermore, studies such as those by Arifin⁷ and Saputra⁸ provide deeper insights into the significance of mountains in the Qur'an. Arifin explores their multifaceted roles, including their creation, classification, and theological meanings, demonstrating their symbolic and practical importance. Saputra highlights the scientific perspective, explaining how mountains function as stabilizing structures, in line with the Qur'anic depiction of them as 'pegs' that prevent the earth from shaking. These perspectives collectively underscore the Qur'anic portrayal of mountains as crucial components of both the physical world and the spiritual realm, reinforcing their role in ecological sustainability, geological stability, and theological reflection. While these studies provide valuable insights, they primarily examine mountains from distinct disciplinary perspectives—whether theological, geological, or ethical—without explicitly synthesizing them into a holistic philosophical framework that unites these dimensions into a comprehensive understanding of mountains in the Qur'an.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Qur'anic philosophy of mountains by integrating ecological, spiritual, and moral dimensions. It seeks to explore how the Qur'an presents mountains not only as physical stabilizers but also as metaphors for resilience, patience, and divine wisdom. By examining Qur'anic references alongside classical exegesis and contemporary environmental ethics, this study aims to bridge the gap between scriptural interpretation and modern scientific discourse. Additionally, this research aspires to demonstrate how the symbolism of mountains can offer valuable insights into human responsibility toward nature and the principles of sustainability. Through this approach, the study contributes to a broader understanding of Islamic environmental ethics and the philosophical implications of natural elements within Qur'anic discourse.

The urgency of this research lies in the growing importance of environmental consciousness in contemporary Islamic thought. While numerous studies have discussed

⁶ Zhang and Wang, "Mountain Biodiversity, Species Distribution and Ecosystem Functioning in a Changing World"; Ang Hu et al., "Mountain Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functions: Interplay between Geology and Contemporary Environments," *The ISME Journal* 14, no. 4 (April 1, 2020): 931–44, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41396-019-0574-x>.

⁷ Samsul Arifin, "Gunungn Dalam Al-Qur'an" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 2015), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/17244/>.

⁸ Ayu Riski Saputra, "Gunung Dan Fungsinya Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Relevansinya Dengan Ilmu Geologi (Kajian Tafsir Ilmi Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia)" (UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2020).

the geological and theological significance of mountains, few have comprehensively analyzed their philosophical implications in relation to modern environmental ethics. The Qur'an presents mountains as signs of divine wisdom and human responsibility, yet their relevance to contemporary sustainability efforts remains underexplored. Given the increasing environmental challenges faced by humanity, revisiting the Qur'anic discourse on mountains through a multidisciplinary lens can provide meaningful contributions to discussions on ecological preservation, resilience, and ethical stewardship. By synthesizing theological interpretations with scientific perspectives, this study seeks to highlight the Qur'an's guidance on maintaining harmony between humans and nature.

This research employs a qualitative approach with a thematic interpretation method, aiming to explore the philosophical meaning of mountains in the Qur'an and their relevance to human life. Given that the study is conceptual and interpretative, it primarily relies on textual analysis of Qur'anic verses that explicitly or implicitly mention mountains. Classical tafsir sources from scholars such as Al-Tabari, Al-Razi, and Ibn Kathir were analyzed alongside modern interpretations from M. Quraish Shihab and contemporary *tafsir ilmi* scholars. The study also incorporates relevant scientific literature on geology and environmental ethics to contextualize the Qur'anic discussion on mountains. A comparative tafsir approach was employed to contrast interpretations across different exegetical traditions, providing a deeper understanding of how Qur'anic perspectives on mountains have evolved over time.

Discussion

Mountains as a Symbol of Ecological Stability

The Qur'an presents mountains as a fundamental element in maintaining the stability of the earth, both physically and symbolically.⁹ In Surah An-Naba' (78:6-7), Allah states:

لَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهْلًا ۖ وَالْجِبَالِ أَوْتَادًا ۖ

"Have We not smoothed out the earth like a bed, and 'made' the mountains as 'its' pegs (Just like tent pegs and icebergs, mountains go deep below the surface, slowing tectonic movement)"

⁹ Rifqoh Wasilah and Ruslan Hayeewaji, "ECOLOGICAL BALANCE IN THE QUR'AN: A THEMATIC REVIEW OF VERSES ON CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION," *MUSHAF: Jurnal Tafsir Berwawasan Keindonesiaan* 4, no. 2 (2024): 85–101, <https://ejournal.unuja.ac.id/index.php/mushaf/article/view/9217>; Ibrahim, "MOUNTAINS AS STABILIZERS FOR EARTH FROM THE QURANIC AND MODERN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVES."

This verse metaphorically compares mountains to stakes (*awtad*), suggesting that they function as stabilizers that secure the earth. Similarly, Surah An-Nahl (16:15) states:

وَأَلْقَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوْسًا أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ١٥

"He has placed into the earth firm mountains, so it does not shake with you, as well as rivers, and pathways so you may find your way."

This verse explicitly describes mountains as preventing the earth from excessive movement, reinforcing their stabilizing role. Classical exegetes interpreted these verses as clear evidence of divine wisdom, emphasizing that mountains were deliberately created to preserve the equilibrium of nature. However, beyond their geological function, mountains also symbolize the Qur'anic concept of *mīzān* (balance), which extends to both the natural and moral order. Al-Tabari in his seminal *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*,¹⁰ explains that mountains are essential components of the earth's structure, preventing sudden shifts that could disrupt life. This balance is not only a physical necessity but also an ethical imperative in Islam, highlighting the interconnectedness between environmental stability and human moral responsibility. If mountains maintain the stability of the earth, humans, as *khalifah fil ard*, must maintain the balance of society and nature through sustainable practices.¹¹

Similarly, Ibn Kathir in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*,¹² affirms that mountains were placed on earth as a sign of Allah's mercy, preventing natural disasters that could result from uncontrolled tectonic movements. He relates these verses to other passages in the Qur'an that emphasize balance (*mīzān*), suggesting that mountains are part of the broader divine order that maintains harmony in creation. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*,¹³ offers a philosophical perspective on the role of mountains, interpreting them as a manifestation of divine wisdom in maintaining cosmic balance. He argues that mountains exemplify the principle of harmony (*mizan*) in creation, serving as a physical demonstration of how divine order sustains both the natural world and human morality.¹⁴ Rather than solely symbolizing spiritual endurance, mountains in Razi's view reflect the

¹⁰ Al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*.

¹¹ Ibrahim, "MOUNTAINS AS STABILIZERS FOR EARTH FROM THE QURANIC AND MODERN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVES."

¹² Isma'il ibn 'Umar Al-Dimasyqiyy Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Azīm*, Vol. 1 (Giza: Mu'assasah Qardaba, 2000).

¹³ Fakhruddin Al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiah, 2000).

¹⁴ Shalahudin. Kafrawi, "Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī's Methodology in Interpreting the Qur'ān" (McGill University, 1999), <https://search.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/fakhr-al-dīn-rāzīs-methodology-interpreting-qurān/docview/304558595/se-2?accountid=159111>.

structured equilibrium that ensures stability in both the physical universe and ethical conduct.¹⁵

From a modern exegetical perspective, M. Quraish Shihab, in *Tafsir Al-Misbah*,¹⁶ integrates scientific insights into the discussion of these verses. He explains that the Qur'anic depiction of mountains aligns with the geological concept of isostasy, which describes how mountains act as counterweights to balance the earth's crust. He also highlights that mountains function as regulators of climate, influencing wind patterns, rainfall distribution, and temperature stabilization—factors crucial for sustaining life.¹⁷ This interpretation bridges the gap between classical tafsir and contemporary scientific understanding, demonstrating the continued relevance of Qur'anic teachings in modern environmental discourse.

Beyond their role as physical stabilizers, mountains in the Qur'an also symbolize the ethical responsibility of humans to preserve ecological balance.¹⁸ The Qur'an frequently emphasizes that nature is an amanah (trust) given to humanity and that humans are appointed as khalifah fil ard (stewards of the earth). Surah Al-A'raf (7:56) instructs:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

"Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set in order. And call upon Him with hope and fear. Indeed, Allah's mercy is always close to the good-doers."

This verse highlights the concept of environmental stewardship in Islam, warning against exploitation and destruction of natural resources. Mountains, as depicted in the Qur'an, serve as a reminder that the stability of the earth is intricately linked to human actions. Just as mountains uphold the earth's structure, humans are entrusted with the duty to maintain balance in the natural world.¹⁹ The Qur'an further reinforces this notion in Surah Al-Hijr (15:19):

¹⁵ Tariq. Jaffer, *Rāzī Master of Quranic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbāh* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2012).

¹⁷ Umaiyatus Syarifah, Jauhar Azizy, and Sihabussalam Sihabussalam, "Environmental Conservation in Quraish Shihab and Hamka's Perspective," *Islamadina : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, September 1, 2024, 114, <https://doi.org/10.30595/islamadina.v0i0.19625>.

¹⁸ Asmawati Muhammad, Abdul Halim Syihab, and Abdul Halim Ibrahim, "Preserving Human–Nature's Interaction for Sustainability: Quran and Sunnah Perspective," *Science and Engineering Ethics* 26, no. 2 (April 11, 2020): 1053–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-020-00192-7>; Akrum Helfaya, Amr Kotb, and Rasha Hanafi, "Qur'anic Ethics for Environmental Responsibility: Implications for Business Practice," *Journal of Business Ethics* 150, no. 4 (July 9, 2018): 1105–28, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3195-6>.

¹⁹ Fitria Susan Meliyana and Aqiel Sifa' Abdallah Putra, "IMPLEMENTATION OF SURAH AL-A'RAF VERSES 56-58 AS THE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE BASED ON ECOSUFISM PARADIGM," *Al-Munir: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 6, no. 2 (October 2024): 175–94,

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رُوسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ ۝ ١٩

"As for the earth, We spread it out and placed upon it firm mountains, and caused everything to grow there in perfect balance."

Classical scholars such as Al-Razi interpret this verse as evidence of divine precision in creation, demonstrating that nature is inherently designed with harmony and sustainability. If mountains symbolize the equilibrium of the earth, then their destruction—whether through environmental degradation or human exploitation—represents a disruption of divine order.²⁰ In contemporary discussions on Islamic environmental ethics, scholars argue that mountains should be viewed as symbols of sustainability and conservation. Islamic teachings emphasize that nature is not merely a resource for exploitation but a sign (*ayah*) of God's creation that must be protected and respected. This is aligned with the principles of maqasid al-shariah (the higher objectives of Islamic law), which include the preservation of life and the environment.²¹

Scientific research further validates these Qur'anic descriptions. The theory of plate tectonics suggests that mountains act as stabilizers by counteracting geological stress.²² Additionally, mountains play a crucial role in hydrological cycles, storing freshwater in glaciers and regulating river systems that support biodiversity and agriculture. Their ecological significance extends beyond geological stability, reinforcing the Qur'anic assertion that mountains contribute to the sustainability of life.²³

Thus, the Qur'anic depiction of mountains as stabilizers serves as both a scientific reality and a moral lesson. Just as mountains maintain the earth's balance, humans are entrusted with the responsibility of preserving ecological equilibrium. Islamic

<https://doi.org/10.24239/AL-MUNIR.V6I2.932>; Mustakim, "Pendidikan Lingkungan Dan Implementasi Dalam Pendidikan Islam (Analisis Surat Al-A'raf Ayat 56-58 Tafsir Al Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab," *Journal of Islamic Education (JIE)* 2 (1), no. 1 (2017), <https://ejournal.stitmuhsbangil.ac.id/index.php/jie/article/view/42>.

²⁰ Al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*.

²¹ Ali Ali Gobaili Saged, Thabet Ahmad Abu Alhaj, and Mohd Yakub Zulkifli Bi, "The Role of the Maqās.id Al-Sharī'ah in Preserving the Environment," *Humanomics* 33, no. 2 (May 8, 2017): 125–32, <https://doi.org/10.1108/H-12-2016-0105>; Norita Mohd Nasir, Mahendhiran Sanggaran Nair, and Pervaiz Khalid Ahmed, "Environmental Sustainability and Contemporary Islamic Society: A Shariah Perspective," *Asian Academy of Management Journal* 27, no. 2 (December 7, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.21315/aamj2022.27.2.10>.

²² Magdalena Mo Ching Mok et al., "Prevalence and Behavioral Ranking of Bullying and Victimization Among Secondary Students in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 23, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 757–67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-013-0151-4>; Bendaoud Saad, "Mountains Gravitational Pegs Stabilize the Earth's Rotation Motion," *Emirati Journal of Space Science* 1, no. 1 (May 25, 2023): 4–25, <https://doi.org/10.54878/EJSS.287>.

²³ Carol P. Harden and Alfonso Fernández, "Mountain Waterscapes: Geographies of Interactions, Transformations, and Meanings," 2022, 275–92, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13298-8_16.

environmental ethics emphasize that nature is a trust (*amanah*) given by God, and humans must actively work to protect it. The Qur'an's portrayal of mountains is not merely a statement of geological fact but a profound reminder of the interconnectedness between divine order, natural equilibrium, and human responsibility.

Mountains as a Symbol of Patience and Strength

The Qur'an frequently uses mountains as metaphors for patience, perseverance, and unwavering faith. One of the most striking examples is found in Surah Al-A'raf (7:143), which recounts the experience of Prophet Musa (Moses) on Mount Sinai:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ۚ قَالَ لَن تَرَانِي وَلَٰكِنِ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ١٤٣

"When Moses came at the appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he asked, "My Lord! Reveal Yourself to me so I may see You." Allah answered, "You cannot see Me! But look at the mountain. If it remains firm in its place, only then will you see Me." When his Lord appeared to the mountain, He levelled it to dust and Moses collapsed unconscious. When he recovered, he cried, "Glory be to You! I turn to You in repentance and I am the first of the believers."

This verse highlights the immense strength and steadfastness of mountains, yet even they cannot withstand the direct manifestation of divine power. This serves as a powerful reminder of human limitations and the necessity of humility before God. Classical scholars have interpreted this verse in various ways. Al-Tabari²⁴ interprets the destruction of the mountain as an indication of the absolute transcendence of God, highlighting the impossibility of human perception of His essence. He explains that the verse emphasizes the limitations of human understanding rather than portraying the mountain as a direct metaphor for steadfastness. The event illustrates that even the strongest natural entities are powerless before divine majesty, reinforcing the Qur'anic teaching that no creation can endure the direct presence of Allah.

Ibn Kathir²⁵ expands on this interpretation by linking it to the broader Qur'anic theme of patience (*sabr*). He explains that mountains, due to their immovable nature, symbolize the patience required in fulfilling divine commands and enduring life's trials. The mention of Prophet Musa's fainting signifies the human struggle to comprehend divine reality, emphasizing the need for perseverance in seeking knowledge and spiritual

²⁴ Al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*.

²⁵ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azim*.

enlightenment. Similarly, Al-Razi²⁶ suggests that the mountain's destruction represents the impermanence of all creation in contrast to God's eternal nature. He argues that mountains are reminders of the necessity of inner strength, as they endure storms, erosion, and time, yet remain standing for centuries.

M. Quraish Shihab draws parallels between mountains and personal resilience, emphasizing that just as mountains withstand external pressures, humans must develop inner fortitude when facing hardship. He relates this to psychological endurance, arguing that patience (*sabr*) is not passive endurance but an active state of remaining firm in adversity.²⁷ By integrating spiritual and psychological perspectives, the Qur'an presents mountains as both a metaphor for resilience and a physical space conducive to mental rejuvenation. He also highlights the Qur'anic connection between patience and divine reward, as seen in Surah Az-Zumar (39:10): *"Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without measure."* Mountains, in this sense, serve as tangible reminders of the virtues of steadfastness, discipline, and unwavering faith.

Beyond spiritual symbolism, mountains also embody physical endurance, reinforcing the Qur'anic concept of *tawakkul* (trust in God). The Qur'an frequently describes mountains as immovable and enduring, mirroring the strength required of believers in their daily struggles. Scientific perspectives further support this notion—geologists explain that mountains take millions of years to form through tectonic uplift and erosion, demonstrating patience as a natural principle. Their ability to withstand erosion while maintaining structural integrity is comparable to human resilience in overcoming adversity.

Thus, the Qur'anic portrayal of mountains as symbols of patience and strength extends beyond mere metaphors—it serves as a spiritual lesson on resilience and trust in God. Just as mountains endure environmental changes without losing their foundation, believers are encouraged to withstand life's trials while maintaining their faith. This reinforces the Qur'anic teaching that steadfastness leads to ultimate success, both in this world and the hereafter. By contemplating the stability of mountains, humans are reminded of the necessity of patience in facing hardship, trust in divine wisdom, and the importance of maintaining spiritual fortitude despite external challenges.

²⁶ Al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*.

²⁷ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Miṣbāḥ*.

Mountains as Places of Revelation and Reflection

The Qur'an frequently associates mountains with divine revelation and spiritual transformation, portraying them as places where prophets received divine guidance.²⁸ One of the most notable examples is Mount Sinai (Jabal al-Tur), where Prophet Musa (Moses) received the Torah, as referenced in several Qur'anic verses. This event signifies that mountains serve as sacred spaces for divine encounters, reinforcing their role in spiritual elevation. Beyond their connection to revelation, mountains also function as sites of contemplation and solitude, providing individuals with an opportunity for self-reflection and closeness to God.²⁹ Surah Al-Hijr (15:82-83) describes how past civilizations carved homes into mountains, seeking protection:

وَكَاؤُوا يَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا ءَامِنِينَ ۝٨٢ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُنْجِحِينَ

" They carved their homes in the mountains, feeling secure. But the 'mighty' blast overtook them in the morning,"

This verse highlights how mountains, despite offering physical security, ultimately remind humans of their dependence on divine protection. Ibn Kathir interprets this passage as a lesson on the transient nature of worldly security, where true safety lies not in material strength but in faith and submission to God.³⁰ This lesson is particularly relevant in contemporary discussions on environmental sustainability. Today, many societies exploit mountains for mining, deforestation, and urban expansion without considering their ecological impact. The Qur'an's depiction of mountains as stabilizers serves as a moral warning against unchecked exploitation of nature. Just as mountains played a role in divine revelation for past prophets, they continue to serve as places of reflection and humility for humanity today. Their preservation is not only an environmental concern but also a spiritual responsibility, reminding us of the need to live in harmony with nature as part of our *amanah* (trust) from God.

²⁸ Ulrika Mårtensson, "Revelation and Prophecy in the Qur'an," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah (Oxford University Press, 2020), 417–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199698646.013.34>; Shahar Arzy et al., "Why Revelations Have Occurred on Mountains?," *Medical Hypotheses* 65, no. 5 (January 2005): 841–45, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mehy.2005.04.044>.

²⁹ Lia Naor and Ofra Mayseless, "The Wilderness Solo Experience: A Unique Practice of Silence and Solitude for Personal Growth," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (September 10, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.547067>; Glòria Durà-Vilà and Gerard Leavey, "Solitude among Contemplative Cloistered Nuns and Monks: Conceptualisation, Coping and Benefits of Spiritually Motivated Solitude," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 45–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2017.1322049>.

³⁰ Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-'Azīm*.

Futhermore, M. Quraish Shihab emphasizes the role of mountains in spiritual retreat and deep reflection, drawing parallels to the experience of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Jabal al-Nur (the Mountain of Light). Before his prophethood, the Prophet spent time in Cave Hira, engaging in contemplation and seeking divine truth.³¹ This reinforces the Qur'anic concept of tafakkur (deep reflection), where believers are encouraged to observe nature as a means of understanding divine wisdom. Contemporary psychological studies support this idea, demonstrating that natural landscapes, particularly mountains, enhance introspection, emotional stability, and mental clarity.³² The Qur'anic depiction of mountains aligns with these insights, suggesting that mountains serve not only as physical structures but also as metaphysical symbols of reflection, humility, and divine connection. Thus, the Qur'anic portrayal of mountains goes beyond their geological existence. They stand as symbols of spiritual elevation, contemplation, and divine revelation, reinforcing the interplay between nature and spirituality. Just as mountains provide stability to the earth, they also offer a grounding space for human souls, reminding believers of the necessity of reflection, humility, and seeking divine guidance in navigating life's challenges.

Conclusion

The Qur'anic portrayal of mountains extends beyond their geological function, positioning them as symbols of cosmic balance (*mīzān*), resilience, and divine wisdom. While classical exegetes such as Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and Al-Razi emphasized their role in maintaining terrestrial stability, modern scholars like M. Quraish Shihab have aligned Qur'anic descriptions with scientific concepts such as isostasy and plate tectonics. This convergence highlights the continued relevance of the Qur'anic discourse on mountains, demonstrating how scriptural interpretations can complement contemporary ecological thought.

Beyond their stabilizing role, mountains serve as metaphors for spiritual endurance (*ṣabr*) and moral steadfastness (*ṭabāt*), reinforcing the Qur'anic theme that

³¹ Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Miṣbāh*.

³² Rahaju Ningtyas et al., "The Impact of Nature Exposure on Mental Health and Well-Being," *West Science Interdisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 08 (August 29, 2023): 543–50, <https://doi.org/10.58812/wsis.v1i08.173>; Hyunju Jo, Chorong Song, and Yoshifumi Miyazaki, "Physiological Benefits of Viewing Nature: A Systematic Review of Indoor Experiments," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 23 (November 27, 2019): 4739, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16234739>.

resilience is attained through perseverance and reflection. The experiences of Prophet Musa on Mount Sinai and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Jabal al-Nur illustrate how mountains symbolize solitude, revelation, and transformative insight. This perspective extends to Islamic environmental ethics, where the Qur'anic emphasis on balance underscores human responsibility as stewards (*khalīfah fil ard'*) of the earth, warning against ecological corruption (*fāsād*), as seen in Surah Al-A'raf (7:56).

While this study is conceptual, its findings suggest broader implications for Islamic ecological ethics and sustainability efforts. Future research should explore how Qur'anic environmental principles can inform climate policies, conservation strategies, and sustainable development initiatives. Ultimately, the Qur'anic philosophy of mountains serves as a timeless reminder that environmental preservation is both a scientific necessity and a spiritual duty, urging humanity to uphold its divine trust (*amānah*) for future generations.

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