

Published:
August 31, 2026

A Comparative Analytical Study of Environmental Protection in the Light of Abrahamic Religions

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Abstract

This study examines the origins, evolution, and modern relevance of environmental ethics and responsibility within the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Through an analysis of sacred texts, theological perspectives, and legal traditions, it argues that environmental care occupies a central place in each faith rather than being a secondary concern.

In Judaism, ecological responsibility is reflected in principles such as *bal tashchit* (the prohibition against unnecessary destruction) and *tikkun olam* (the obligation to improve and repair the world), both of which are incorporated into Jewish legal thought. Christianity, although historically associated with the idea of human dominion over nature, has increasingly emphasized stewardship, particularly through contemporary teachings such as *Laudato Si'*, which presents environmental protection as a moral and spiritual duty. Islam likewise offers a rich ecological framework through Qur'anic references to nature as signs of God (*ayat*), the concept of *khilāfah* (human trusteeship), and Prophetic teachings that stress harmony (*mīzān*) and responsibility (*amānah*).

The article also compares ethical approaches across the three traditions, identifying common values as well as differences in theology and legal practice. Furthermore, it explores interfaith cooperation, public policy contributions, and future opportunities for joint action in confronting environmental challenges, including climate change. The study concludes that, despite theological distinctions, the Abrahamic faiths share ethical resources capable of fostering collective responses to contemporary ecological problems.

Keywords: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Environmental Ethics, Stewardship, Bal Tashchit, Tikkun Olam, Khilāfah, Mīzān, Interfaith Cooperation, Climate Change, Abrahamic Religions

Environmental Ethics as an Academic Discipline

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Environmental ethics is a specialized branch of applied philosophy that examines the ethical relationship between human beings and the natural environment. Unlike conventional ethical theories, which primarily focus on obligations within human society, environmental ethics broadens moral consideration to include animals, plants, ecosystems, and the earth itself. The discipline emerged prominently during the 1970s in response to growing environmental concerns such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change, and has since become a major area of inquiry within contemporary moral philosophy.

Among the earliest scholars to question the adequacy of traditional ethical systems was Richard Routley (later known as Sylvan). In his influential essay “Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?” he argued:

“Is there a need for a new, an environmental ethic? We contend that there is such a need, since traditional ethics has restricted itself to the human sphere and has nothing to say about how humans should relate to the natural environment and its non-human contents.¹

This observation highlighted a major limitation of anthropocentric ethics: its failure to address moral obligations toward the natural world. Routley’s critique paved the way for recognizing forests, rivers, and other natural entities as deserving ethical consideration.

Building upon this foundation, Holmes Rolston III maintained that nature possesses value independent of human interests. According to Rolston, the environment should not be valued merely for its usefulness to people; rather, soils, waters, plants, and animals possess intrinsic worth. Ethical reflection, therefore, must extend beyond human society to encompass the broader ecological community.

A significant contribution to environmental ethics was also made by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*, where he formulated the concept of the “Land Ethic”:

“A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”²

¹ Routley, Richard. “Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?” In *Proceedings of the XVth World Congress of Philosophy*, 205–210. Varna, Bulgaria, 1973.

² Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1949.

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Leopold's approach shifted ethical evaluation from human benefit to ecological well-being. In doing so, he expanded the scope of moral responsibility to include the land and its living systems.

Another influential perspective emerged through the work of Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, the founder of "deep ecology." He asserted:

"The right of all forms [of life] to live is a universal right which cannot be quantified. No single species of living being has more of this particular right to live and unfold than any other species."³

Næss distinguished between "shallow ecology," which focuses on environmental protection for human benefit, and "deep ecology," which acknowledges the inherent value of all living beings. His philosophy advocated a more egalitarian understanding of life and significantly expanded the boundaries of moral concern.

Collectively, the ideas of Routley, Rolston, Leopold, and Næss established environmental ethics as an independent academic discipline. Their work challenged human-centered perspectives and promoted the understanding that human beings are participants within, rather than rulers over, the ecological community.

The Relationship between Religion and Ecology

The connection between religion and ecology has existed throughout history, even though the term "environmental ethics" is relatively modern. Sacred scriptures and religious traditions consistently portray the natural world as a manifestation of divine creation that deserves respect, protection, and care. Within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the universe is understood as the purposeful creation of God rather than a random occurrence. Consequently, environmental responsibility is closely linked with religious morality and is regarded as an expression of obedience to the Divine.

Religion as a Basis for Ecological Consciousness

³ Næss, Arne. "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary." *Inquiry* 16, no. 1 (1973): 95–100.

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The contemporary study of religion and ecology was significantly influenced by thinkers such as Lynn White Jr., who examined the impact of religious beliefs on humanity's treatment of nature. In his well-known essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (1967), he stated:

"What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny that is, by religion."⁴

White argued that religious worldviews play a decisive role in shaping environmental attitudes and behavior. While certain interpretations of biblical dominion have been used to justify exploitation, religious traditions also contain powerful teachings regarding stewardship and responsibility. His work inspired extensive scholarship exploring how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can contribute theological solutions to contemporary ecological challenges.

Scriptural Example

The Hebrew Bible portrays creation as a reflection of God's majesty and glory. In the Book of Psalms, nature is presented as a witness to divine greatness:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."⁵

This verse illustrates that the natural world is more than a collection of resources; it serves as evidence of God's creative activity. From this perspective, environmental care involves recognizing creation as a manifestation of divine wisdom and presence. Religion therefore provides not only ethical directives but also spiritual motivation for ecological responsibility.

The Significance of a Comparative Study of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

A comparative examination of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is essential for a comprehensive understanding of environmental ethics. As Abrahamic faiths, these

⁴ White, Lynn Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–1207.

⁵ The Holy Bible, King James Version. New York: American Bible Society, 1999, Psalm 19:1.

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traditions share belief in one God, divine creation, and humanity's responsibility toward the earth. At the same time, each tradition interprets these themes in distinctive ways. Comparative analysis helps identify both shared values and unique perspectives, thereby enriching interfaith dialogue on environmental concerns.

Shared Abrahamic Perspectives

All three Abrahamic traditions portray human beings as trustees rather than absolute owners of the earth. The Qur'an emphasizes this responsibility through the concept of *khilāfah*:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً⁶

“And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent.’⁷

The concept of *khilāfah* signifies stewardship and accountability rather than unrestricted control. Human beings are entrusted with maintaining harmony and balance within creation, a principle that finds parallels in both Jewish and Christian teachings on stewardship.

Likewise, Pope Francis emphasized the universal nature of ecological responsibility in *Laudato Si'* (2015):

“The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor. We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth.”⁸

This statement links biblical teachings on creation with contemporary environmental concerns and demonstrates the shared ethical foundations that unite the Abrahamic faiths in caring for the natural world.

Importance of the Comparative Approach

Studying Judaism, Christianity, and Islam together enables scholars to:

- Identify common theological foundations for environmental stewardship.
- Appreciate diverse interpretations that contribute to richer dialogue.

⁶ The Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 2:30.

⁷ The Qur'an. Translated by Saheeh International. Riyadh: Dar Abul-Qasim, 1997, 2:30.

⁸ Francis. *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015.

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- Encourage cooperation in interfaith environmental initiatives.

Accordingly, comparative study serves both as an academic framework and as a practical means of addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity today: the global ecological crisis.

Foundations of Environmental Responsibility in Judaism Biblical Concepts of Creation and Stewardship

Within Judaism, environmental responsibility is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh), particularly the Torah. Jewish tradition understands creation as a deliberate act of God and regards humanity as entrusted with the duty of protecting and preserving the natural world. This understanding forms the ethical basis of Jewish environmental thought. The concepts of creation (*bereshit*) and stewardship (*shomrei adamah*—guardianship of the earth) occupy a central place in Jewish ecological ethics. The Book of Genesis presents two complementary accounts of creation that shape humanity's relationship with nature: the command to "subdue" the earth and the responsibility "to till and keep" it. Rabbinic interpretation generally views these commands not as contradictory but as mutually reinforcing, emphasizing responsible guardianship rather than exploitation.

The Biblical Account of Creation

Genesis introduces humanity's special role within creation:

"So God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'⁹

This passage identifies human beings as bearers of the divine image (*tzelem Elohim*). Although the commands to "subdue" and "have dominion" have sometimes been interpreted as permission for exploitation, Jewish exegetical traditions generally reject such readings.

As Rashi explained:

⁹ The Holy Bible, Genesis 1:27–28

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“If he merits, he rules over the beasts and cattle; if not, he will become subjugated before them.”¹⁰

According to this interpretation, dominion is conditional upon moral conduct and carries with it the responsibility to preserve the integrity of creation.

Stewardship in the Garden of Eden

The second creation narrative in Genesis offers another important perspective on humanity’s environmental role:

“The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it.”¹¹

The Hebrew expressions *le’ovdah* (“to cultivate” or “serve”) and *le’shomrah* (“to guard” or “protect”) indicate that humanity’s relationship with nature is one of care and responsibility rather than domination. This verse has therefore become a foundational text for Jewish understandings of environmental stewardship.

Balancing Dominion and Stewardship

The dual mandate found in Genesis reflects a balanced understanding of humanity’s relationship with nature. Human beings are permitted to benefit from the earth’s resources, yet they are equally obligated to safeguard and preserve them. Jewish environmental ethics emerges from this dynamic interaction between utilization and conservation. Rabbinic scholars interpret this responsibility as the duty of humanity to act as guardians (*shomrei adamah*) of the divine creation.

As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch observed:

“When you use the powers of nature, regard them as divine gifts to be employed, never for your own careless or wanton self-indulgence, but for wise and noble purposes.”¹²

Hirsch, Samson Raphael. *The Nineteen Letters*. Translated by Bernard Drachman. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1899, 57.

¹⁰ Rashi. Commentary on Genesis 1:26.

¹¹ The Holy Bible, Genesis 2:15.

¹² Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982)

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The two creation narratives therefore present a complementary vision in which authority is inseparable from responsibility. Human dominion is not absolute but conditional upon righteousness and obedience to God. This perspective rejects a purely human-centered worldview and instead promotes a theocentric understanding in which God remains the true owner of creation while humanity serves as its caretaker.

The Psalmist affirms this principle:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.”¹³

Alter, Robert. *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007, 82.

This declaration establishes that ultimate ownership belongs to God alone. Human beings merely hold the earth in trust, a concept that provides a strong theological basis for environmental ethics within Judaism. Ecological responsibility is therefore understood as a religious obligation rather than merely a secular concern.

Halakhic Perspectives on Ecology

Halakhah (Jewish law) offers a comprehensive framework governing not only ritual practice but also ethical conduct and humanity’s interaction with the natural environment. Environmental concerns are addressed through various legal principles regulating agriculture, conservation, land management, and the prevention of waste. These teachings demonstrate that ecological awareness has long been embedded within Jewish legal and religious tradition.

The Principle of Bal Tashchit (Do Not Destroy)

One of the most important ecological principles in Jewish law is bal tashchit, which originates in Deuteronomy 20:19–20. In this passage, the destruction of fruit-bearing trees during warfare is prohibited.

“When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you

¹³ The Holy Bible, Psalm 24:1

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shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?¹⁴

Deuteronomy 20:19.

Rabbinic authorities extended the application of this command far beyond wartime circumstances, transforming it into a general prohibition against unnecessary destruction and waste of resources.

Maimonides explained:

“Not only trees, but anyone who breaks utensils, tears clothing, demolishes a building, stops up a spring, or destroys food in a destructive manner transgresses the command of bal tashchit.¹⁵

Maimonides. Mishneh Torah: Laws of Kings and Their Wars. Translated by Eliyahu Touger. New York: Moznaim Publishing, 1987, 212.

This interpretation broadened environmental responsibility to encompass all forms of wasteful behavior affecting the natural world.

The Sabbatical and Jubilee Years

Jewish law also promotes ecological sustainability through the institutions of Shemittah (Sabbatical Year) and Yovel (Jubilee Year). Every seventh year, agricultural land is required to rest, while its produce remains available to the poor and to animals. This system prevents excessive exploitation of natural resources and reinforces the belief that the land ultimately belongs to God.

“But in the seventh year the land shall have a complete rest, a sabbath for the Lord; you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.¹⁶

Milgrom, Jacob. Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Anchor Bible Commentary, Vol. 3B. New York: Doubleday, 2001, 2158.

¹⁴ Deut. 20:19 (English Standard Version)

¹⁵ Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melakhim u'Milchamoteihem 6:10

¹⁶ Leviticus 25:4, New Revised Standard Version

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Such regulations encourage long-term ecological balance and remind humanity that ownership of the earth remains divine rather than human.

Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World) and Environmental Ethics

The concept of Tikkun Olam (“repairing the world”) occupies a prominent place in Jewish ethical thought and has increasingly been applied to environmental concerns. Emerging from rabbinic teachings and later developed within Lurianic Kabbalah, the concept reflects the belief that human beings share responsibility with God in restoring and perfecting creation. Although originally associated with social and spiritual reform, contemporary Jewish thinkers have expanded it to include ecological restoration and environmental care.

Rabbinic Origins of Tikkun Olam

The phrase first appears in the Mishnah (Gittin 4:2), where certain legal rulings are enacted *mipnei tikkun ha-olam* (“for the sake of repairing the world”). Over time, this legal principle evolved into a broader ethical vision concerned with improving society and preserving creation.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks described this responsibility as follows:

“To be a Jew is to be summoned to responsibility, not only for one’s own people but for the world, to mend its fractures and heal its wounds.”¹⁷

Sacks, Jonathan. To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility. New York: Schocken Books, 2005, 89.

Kabbalistic Expansion: Humanity as Co-Creator

Within the Lurianic Kabbalistic tradition, Tikkun Olam became associated with the doctrine of *shevirat ha-kelim* (“the shattering of the vessels”). According to this teaching, creation experienced a form of cosmic fragmentation, and humanity participates in its restoration through ethical and spiritual actions.

¹⁷ Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007)

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From an ecological perspective, environmental destruction may be viewed as a continuation of this cosmic brokenness, while conservation and stewardship contribute to the healing of creation.

Kook, Abraham Isaac. Orot HaKodesh. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1964, Vol. 2, 452.

Modern Environmental Application

In contemporary Jewish thought, Tikkun Olam has become closely associated with environmental justice and ecological activism. Organizations such as Hazon and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) employ the concept to frame environmental protection as a religious responsibility.

As a result, activities such as tree planting, water conservation, sustainable living, and efforts to combat climate change are viewed not merely as civic duties but as sacred acts that contribute to the restoration of God's creation. Through Tikkun Olam, environmental stewardship becomes a spiritual mission and a fulfillment of humanity's covenantal responsibility.

Nature as Divine Signs (Āyāt)

Islamic teachings view the natural world as a manifestation of God's creative power and wisdom. The Qur'an repeatedly describes elements of nature as **āyāt** (signs), inviting human beings to contemplate the Creator through His creation. Accordingly, the environment is not merely a source of material benefit but a sacred reality that reflects divine attributes. Ecological responsibility therefore emerges from the recognition that nature possesses spiritual as well as physical significance.

The Qur'an states:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for people of understanding.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Qur'an 3:190

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This verse emphasizes that the universe functions as a continuous reminder of divine wisdom. The cycles of nature are presented as opportunities for reflection and gratitude rather than objects of careless exploitation.

Similarly, the Qur'an declares:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ

“And there is no creature on the earth nor bird that flies with its wings but they are communities like you.”¹⁹

By describing animals as communities comparable to human society, the Qur'an attributes dignity and value to non-human life. Humanity is therefore portrayed as part of a larger ecological order rather than as an isolated or superior entity. This perspective encourages respect for all living beings and their habitats.

Ecological Balance and Harmony

The Qur'an further introduces the concept of **mīzān** (balance), which serves as a foundational ecological principle:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ

“And He raised the heaven and established the balance, so that you may not transgress within that balance.”²⁰

According to this teaching, creation is structured according to divine harmony and proportion. Environmental degradation and excessive exploitation are viewed as violations of this balance. Human beings, as God's representatives on earth, are entrusted with the duty of maintaining rather than disrupting the equilibrium of creation.

Taken together, these teachings present nature as a repository of divine signs and establish environmental care as an essential religious responsibility rather than a modern ethical concern.

The Principle of Khilāfah (Stewardship)

¹⁹ Qur'an 6:38

²⁰ Qur'an 55:7–8

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A central concept in Islamic environmental ethics is **khilāfah**, commonly translated as stewardship or vicegerency. The Qur'an describes humanity as entrusted with responsibility for the earth:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

“And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will place upon the earth a vicegerent.’²¹

Classical Muslim scholars interpreted this verse as assigning humanity a role of responsible governance rather than unrestricted domination. Human authority is therefore conditional upon obedience to God and proper care of creation.

Another verse highlights the accountability associated with stewardship:

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

“Then We made you successors upon the earth after them so that We might observe how you act.”²²

This passage demonstrates that stewardship is not a privilege alone but also a moral test. Human actions toward the environment are subject to divine evaluation and judgment.

Comparative Ethical Frameworks

Common Themes within the Abrahamic Traditions

The Hebrew Bible begins with the declaration:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”²³

Similarly, the Qur'an proclaims:

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

“Allah is the Creator of all things.”²⁴

The New Testament likewise affirms:

“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that has been made.”²⁵

²¹ Qur'an 2:30

²² Qur'an 10:14

²³ Genesis 1:1, New International Version

²⁴ Qur'an (Allah is the Creator of all things)

²⁵ John 1:3, New International Version

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Together, these texts emphasize that the natural world possesses value because it originates from divine intention and purpose.

Moderation and Ecological Balance

Islamic teachings stress balance through the principle of **mīzān**:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ

“And He raised the heaven and imposed the balance, that you not transgress within the balance.”²⁶

Christian theology similarly recognizes harmony within creation. Augustine observed:

“All things that exist are good, insofar as they exist, and all natural order comes from God.”²⁷

In Judaism, ecological restraint is institutionalized through the Sabbatical Year:

“In the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land.”²⁸

These teachings collectively demonstrate that environmental excess and exploitation are regarded as violations of divine order.

Interfaith Dialogue on Climate Change

Contemporary environmental challenges have encouraged cooperation among religious communities. Climate change, in particular, has become a major area of interfaith engagement.

Prior to the Paris Climate Conference (COP21), religious leaders from diverse traditions issued a joint declaration stating:

“Humanity is at a turning point. We must act now, out of love for our common home, to protect the earth from further climate disruption.”²⁹

Such initiatives demonstrate that despite theological differences, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a commitment to protecting creation and promoting ecological justice. Their

²⁶ Qur'an 55:7–8

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947)

²⁸ Leviticus 25:4, New International Version

²⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), paras. 13–14

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combined ethical resources provide a strong foundation for addressing global environmental crises.

Interfaith Initiatives on Environmental Responsibility

In recent decades, environmental concerns have increasingly encouraged collaboration among the Abrahamic faith traditions. Issues such as climate change, ecological degradation, and biodiversity loss have created a shared platform where Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities engage in joint moral reflection and action. This represents a shift from isolated theological discourse toward cooperative ethical engagement for the protection of the planet.

Global Interfaith Declarations

A landmark moment in interfaith environmental cooperation was the Assisi Declarations on Nature (1986), organized under the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Representatives of major religions collectively affirmed ecological responsibility. The Islamic statement highlighted core theological principles:

“Unity, trusteeship and accountability, that is tawḥīd, khilāfah, and akhira, the three central concepts of Islam, unite Muslims in their environmental ethos. They constitute the basic values taught by the Qur’an. Together, they form a comprehensive worldview which can make Muslims conscious of their responsibilities to Allah in relation to the whole of creation.”³⁰

This declaration marked an important step in formally linking religious doctrines with global ecological concerns.

Interfaith Cooperation in Climate Advocacy

Further progress was made during preparations for the Copenhagen Climate Summit (COP15), when Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders issued a unified appeal:

³⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), chap. 2 (paraphrased idea of tawḥīd, khilāfah, and akhira in environmental ethics)

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“We call on all people of faith to recognize that climate change is not only a scientific or economic issue but a moral and spiritual challenge. It is our duty as stewards of the earth, guided by our religious traditions, to protect creation for future generations.”³¹

This statement reframed climate change as a shared ethical responsibility, transcending doctrinal differences and emphasizing collective stewardship of the earth.

Regional and Practical Collaborations

At a regional level, interfaith environmental cooperation has been visible in various initiatives, including collaborations between Christian and Muslim organizations in sustainable living projects. These efforts draw upon shared scriptural teachings on stewardship and responsibility, while also contributing to broader goals of social harmony and peacebuilding in divided regions.

NGO and Institutional Efforts

Organizations such as the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) have played a significant role in translating theological principles into practical environmental action. Through partnerships with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, ARC has supported initiatives such as eco-religious centers, green places of worship, and sustainable farming projects. These programs demonstrate how religious ethics can be transformed into tangible environmental practices.

Collectively, these initiatives show that environmental ethics has become a unifying platform where theological differences are secondary to shared ecological responsibility.

Policy Influence of Religious Ethics on Global Environmentalism

In the contemporary era, religious voices have gained increasing influence in global environmental discourse. While scientific and economic analyses remain central, religious traditions now contribute a moral dimension that frames ecological degradation as an ethical crisis rather than merely a technical problem.

³¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), paras. 202–216 (paraphrased idea)

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Religious Leadership in Global Policy

A significant example is Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), which played an influential role in shaping global climate discussions leading up to the Paris Agreement (COP21). He states:

“A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.”³²

This document encouraged policymakers to consider environmental issues within a moral framework, emphasizing justice, sustainability, and global solidarity.

Islamic and Jewish Contributions to Policy Dialogue

In the same period, Muslim scholars issued the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, urging immediate action against environmental destruction. The document emphasizes humanity's role as **khalifah** (stewards) and calls for ecological justice rooted in Qur'anic ethics.

Jewish environmental organizations, including the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), have similarly engaged in policy advocacy, promoting renewable energy and sustainable legislation through the ethical concept of **tikkun olam** (repairing the world).

Together, these contributions demonstrate that religious ethics increasingly inform environmental policymaking at both national and international levels.

Prospects for Future Cooperation

The growing ecological crisis presents an opportunity for deeper cooperation among the Abrahamic faiths. Despite theological diversity, shared ethical foundations provide a strong basis for sustained collaboration in environmental protection.

Shared Ethical Foundations

³² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement, 2015, preamble

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All three traditions affirm that creation is divine in origin, humanity is entrusted with stewardship, and ecological balance must be preserved. These principles create a common moral vocabulary that supports joint environmental engagement across religious boundaries.

Institutional and Grassroots Development

- Future cooperation may expand through several pathways:
- Strengthening interfaith environmental NGOs
- Coordinated engagement in international climate negotiations
- Expansion of local initiatives such as green mosques, synagogues, and churches
- Community-based projects in renewable energy, conservation, and sustainable agriculture

Concluding Perspective (Expanded)

A key reflection from the Faith and Science dialogue (2021) captures this shared responsibility:

“Future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden; we must not leave a desert to our children.”

This statement highlights a profound ethical urgency that transcends academic, scientific, and political boundaries. It frames environmental care not merely as a technical or policy challenge, but as a moral obligation rooted in our responsibility toward those who will come after us. The imagery of the earth as a “garden” entrusted to humanity emphasizes stewardship, care, and gratitude, while the warning against leaving a “desert” underscores the irreversible consequences of neglect and exploitation.

This vision further underscores that environmental responsibility is not limited to scientific or political domains but is deeply embedded in spiritual and ethical worldviews. Across religious traditions, humanity is consistently reminded that the natural world is not a possession to be used carelessly, but a trust to be preserved with wisdom and restraint. In

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this sense, ecological responsibility becomes an expression of faith, conscience, and accountability.

If effectively harnessed, the combined moral strength of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can contribute meaningfully to addressing the global ecological crisis. These traditions, despite their theological differences, converge on shared principles of stewardship, justice, and responsibility toward creation. By drawing upon these common ethical foundations, interfaith cooperation can play a transformative role in fostering environmental awareness, encouraging sustainable practices, and inspiring collective action for the protection of our shared planet.

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Published:
August 31, 2026

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