

The Sounds of Nature: The Qur'an and Physics

The Waldorf pedagogy is to introduce the whole before the parts. We will focus on the whole being the sounds of nature before moving to the parts which would be the isolated sounds and instrumental sounds. While Music is geometry in acoustic form, many Muslim families will entirely reject the study of music in this way according to some hadith regarding music. If you find that music is permissible, then you may include music study as part of physics and geometry as there is much natural overlap in the Waldorf curriculum.

Historically, the natural sounds of wind, water, thunder, and other botanical and zoological sounds became the inspiration for musical instruments and the evolution of replicated and instrumental sound. Understanding acoustics isn't just about physics but also about recognizing the meaningfulness of life and the divine design of the natural world. In every step of these lessons, a remembrance of Allah and a praising of Him is essential. In all these wonders are indeed signs for those who understand.

In this lesson you may also delve deeper into geometry and physics by examining the natural forms and movements of nature such as spirals or vortices (water, wind and weather patterns). Waldorf philosophy often returns to the archetypes within main lesson blocks, and this too is an opportunity to reflect on the deeper archetypes of movement. These archetypes are present in both the macro (like landscapes) and micro (like embryonic development) levels of creation.

An Islamic equivalent of this idea of archetypes would center around the concept of **Tawhid** (the oneness of God) and the **natural signs of Allah (Ayat)**, which reflect divine order and harmony in creation. We may ponder who all creation is in a constant state of obedience to Allah in the form of *Tasbih*. Every element of a tree, mountain, lion or human is in *Tasbih* to Allah. These reflections are a way to understand Allah's attributes and the perfection of His creation.

Surah Ar-Rum (30:48-50) describes how Allah sends winds and clouds, reviving dead earth, which points to His power and mercy: *"It is Allah who sends the winds and stirs up clouds, and then He spreads them in the sky however He wills, and makes them break into pieces, until you see rain emerge from within them. And when He causes it to fall on whom He wills of His servants, immediately they rejoice."*

This reflects how natural processes—like winds and rain—are purposeful signs from Allah, much like the page's description of natural sounds being archetypes of movement and form.

Additionally, the emphasis on **harmony in the cosmos** can be seen in **Surah Al-Mulk (67:3-4)**, which describes how Allah created the heavens in perfect harmony, urging humans to reflect: *"He who created the seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return your vision to the sky, do you see any breaks? Then return your vision twice again, your vision will return to you humbled while it is fatigued."*

These ayat are reminders for us to recognize the divine order in the natural world and understand creation as a manifestation of something greater, guiding humans to contemplate the oneness of God through the signs around them.

The Quran contains several ayat that reference natural phenomena that produce sound, as well as the significance of sounds in creation. These verses often encourage reflection on the power and wisdom of Allah through the natural world.

Surah Al-Nazi'at (79:6-9) – Sounds of the Day of Judgment:

"On the Day the quaking will quake. There will follow it the subsequent one. Hearts, that Day, will tremble. Their eyes humbled."

This passage refers to the sound and trembling associated with the final earthquake on the Day of Judgment, reflecting both the power and fearsome nature of this event. This ayat may be too powerful for young children or for those living in areas prone to earthquakes. Teacher discretion is advised as you know your students best.

Surah Ar-Ra'd (13:13) – The Thunder Praises Allah:

"And the thunder exalts [Allah] with praise, and the angels [as well] from fear of Him, and He sends thunderbolts and strikes therewith whom He wills, yet they dispute about Allah; and He is severe in assault."

This ayat reminds us that even thunder is a form of praise to Allah, and this is their form of *tasbih* that every element never ceases to do. Even the natural sounds and phenomena in the sky bear witness to Allah's greatness.

Surah Al-Isra (17:44) – All Creation Glorifies Allah:

"The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it glorifies His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving."

Though humans may not understand the sounds of glorification from natural elements, this verse emphasizes that all of creation, including the sounds we cannot hear, constantly praises Allah. This is my favorite ayat for this lesson. How incredible to include the sounds that we do not hear with our human senses, and yet all of creation is unceasingly praising Allah even when we do not hear it. But when we do hear the sounds of nature, ocean waves or thunder, we may not immediately connect those as signs of praise to Allah. This is a reminder that when we are blessed with hearing the sounds of nature, especially the ones that frighten us, it is our reminder to praise and thank Allah.

Surah Fussilat (41:11) – The Heavens and Earth Speak:

"Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, 'Come into being, willingly or by compulsion.' They said, 'We have come willingly.'"

While this ayat isn't about literal sound, it portrays the heavens and earth "responding" to Allah's command, illustrating that even inanimate creation can be perceived as communicating with its Creator. And while we may describe inorganic material as lifeless, the fact that Allah reminds us the even the heavens and the earth responded to Allah's command and obeyed willingly is another proof that everything in creation has a level of self-awareness that recognizes that Allah is the Creator.

Surah Al-Hajj (22:65) – The Sound of Thunder and Rain:

"Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you whatever is on the earth and the ships which run through the sea by His command? And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission. Indeed Allah, to the people, is Kind and Merciful."

While this ayat doesn't directly reference sound, the imagery of the heavens being held up and ships navigating the sea evokes the sounds of nature, such as wind and waves, which point to Allah's mercy. I love that much of the Qur'an speaks of things within our senses so that there is no question of our ability to understand.

Surah Qaf (50:9-10) – Rain and Its Life-Giving Properties:

"And We have sent down blessed rain from the sky and made grow thereby gardens and grain from the harvest. And lofty palm trees having fruit arranged in layers."

The sound of rain is often mentioned in the Quran. It is an example of a life-giving natural sound that is a mercy from Allah. Conversely, you could compare the sound of snow and its life giving qualities that are stored and delivered slowly and more silently.

Surah Al-An'am (6:99) – The Sound of Growth:

"And He is the One who sends down water from the sky. With it We produce vegetation of all kinds, from which We bring forth green stalks. From these We bring forth clustered grain. And from palm trees—loaded with clusters of dates hanging within reach. And We produce gardens of grapevines, olives, and pomegranates—similar in shape but unmatched in taste. Look at their fruit as it yields and ripens. Indeed, in these are signs for people who believe."

This ayat connects the natural process of growth with the signs of Allah's power. The imagery of vegetation sprouting after rain, with the accompanying subtle sounds of growth, demonstrates nature's obedience to divine will. This ayat is one that beautifully connects the student to the previous study in botany and can be used in that main lesson block as well.

Surah Al-Zalzalah (99:1-2) – The Sound of the Earth Quaking:

"When the earth is shaken with its [final] earthquake, and the earth discharges its burdens."

The shaking of the earth on the Day of Judgment would naturally be accompanied by overwhelming sounds, signifying the earth responding to the divine command. Many of these sounds (in smaller ways) have already been heard by humans, so the final day's sounds are not abstract or irreverent to us. We are frightened by the great roar of thunder or a tornado or the rumble of the earthquake or the explosion of a volcano, so we may easily imagine the more terrifying sounds of the Last Day.

These Ayat show how sound, whether from natural events like thunder, rain, earthquakes, or other natural processes, serves as a reminder of Allah's power and His signs in creation. Sounds in the natural world may be heard or silent to our human ears, but they are ever present and remind us of Allah's will and glory, inviting believers to reflect on the divine presence in everything around them.