

In Praise of Nature

We often use this word "Hallelujah" as a word to express joy when something we've hoped for has come to fruition.

But "Hallelujah" or "Alleluia" is an ancient Hebrew word that means "praise God" or more specifically praise Yah (as in Yahweh).

This special Hebrew divine name comes from the verb "to be". In the Hebrew scriptures Moses asks God, "What shall I say if they ask me "What is his name?"

Tell them, "I am has sent you."

So "hallelujah" could mean "praise the divine that is", or "praise the God who is has caused things to be."

During the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, the world was seen as a watch or the physics of a billiards game. A simple mechanistic world.

But along came the Romantic movement, those artists, musicians, theologians, and writers who saw sacred mystery in nature.

Some even equating God with Nature.

Our Transcendentalist ancestors, a truly Unitarian movement, did the same.

From them we learn the natural world is not something to be quantified but something to be mystified by.

This time of year, Nature is especially worthy to be praised. Of course, we are cut off a bit from the nature's cycles. We can all too easily forget the importance of the return of the sun and plants growing again when we have electronically controlled furnaces and imported asparagus from Peru.

But yet, Nature, feeds our bodies as well as our spirits. We sometimes observe nature in unbelievably powerful ways. I was with my wife driving through Yellowstone Park once in late May.

Snow still covered most of the park.

In fact, the only open road was in a valley where much of the wildlife comes to feed on the new vegetation of spring.

I was paying close attention to the winding road ahead and out of the corner of my eye I saw a pack of wolves chasing a herd of bison over a nearby hill.

Another time, a friend was driving us home from a work related conference through a rural part of Wisconsin.

I saw a huge green ball of fire travel across sky.

It seemed like that green ball landed nearby.

Just around the bend in the road we saw the flashing blue and red lights of police car.

My friend said, "It was a UFO and the police went to capture it before anyone else could get there. The government is always covering up stuff like this."

When we passed the police car,

I saw an officer handing someone a traffic ticket.

I went home and Googled that green ball of light.

It was a meteor.

Praise be to nature.

The struggle for survival.

Neon green chunks of rock burning up in our atmosphere.

All worthy of praise.

But no wonder of nature is grander than spring itself.

Winter, where everything seems dead, lifeless, and brown.

But all of the sudden, new life!

Dormant seeds rise up.

Since probably the first humans,

nature was something to be praised and celebrated.

And Spring specifically is and was a festival of new life and rebirth.

So it is with us now,

it our time celebrate the newness in our lives and put aside our wintry dark past.

We must let the new seeds of thought and spirit rise up and grow in us.

German and English speakers are the only ones to call this time of year Easter or in German Ostern, which refers to the east or dawn.

All other European languages use a variation of Paschal, from the Hebrew word for Passover.

Some trace the word "Easter" to Ostara, a goddess of dawn.

For me, Easter is the newness of life brought on from the dawning sun of the east.

We celebrate the new life of a rising sun within.

The wolf pack chasing bison over the hills.

The neon green streaking path of a meteor.

All worthy of our exultation and praise.

But it is spring that reawakens the earth,

as we too are reawakened from our prisons and pain.

We shall be made anew.

I have good news.

The dark days are through.

The days of light are upon us.

Flowers are blooming

Life is giving birth to life

And we are here,

aware of this unfolding process

and the renewing power of nature.

This is all worthy of praise.

Hallelujah!