



*In preparation for “Earth Day”
(Saturday, April 22)
A Variety of Responsive Readings*

A MEDITATION BY SOPHIE JAKOWSKI:

*(from the United Nations Environment Programme, 1990, U.N.
Room DC 2-803, New York, NY 10017)*

READER 1: Knowledge must be used to save nature, to restore it. Forests, soils, waters, the flora & fauna, all are necessary. They must be used wisely to permit their renewal.

READER 2: We cannot use them without considering the future. Future generations, after us, will depend on what is left.

All: We have duties toward God & toward one another. We also have serious obligations towards nature. Our life depends on it. We owe nature a great debt.

READER 1: All the things God made are wonderful.

READER 2: All the things God has made are good.

All: All the things God has made are beautiful.

READER 1: Let us contemplate nature undisturbed and at peace:
think of the sky and the mountains...
think of the ocean and the rivers...
think of fields and forests...

READER 2: Let us look around...

Think of the beauty of the little corner where we live.
There are still many beautiful places on earth that we can protect and make more beautiful. There are still many plants and animals we can save from extinction. They may help us survive.

All: God has given us the intelligence & ability to do this. Let us live in peace with the earth. So be it. Amen!

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ADVICE FROM A TEENAGER

One: The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely, or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite alone with the heavens, nature, and God.

All: Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be, and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature.

One: As long as this exists, and it certainly always will,
I know that then there will always be comfort for every sorrow,
whatever the circumstances may be.

**All: And I firmly believe that nature brings comfort
in all troubles. (from Anne Frank's diary)**

OUR COMMITMENT TO GOD'S GOOD EARTH:

One: The decisions we make in the days to come will affect the fate of our planet, our children, and ourselves.

All: We will be alert to our environment, noticing stories in newspapers and on TV about water & weather, soil & sky, toxic chemicals & waste.

One: We will fight pollution wherever we find it, and
recycle bottles, cans, & paper whenever possible.

All: We will enjoy nature, and be kind to living things.

One: We will nurture green plants and trees, to combat the
excess carbon dioxide building up in the atmosphere.

**All: We will cut down on energy consumption and try not to waste.
We will make a difference. We will!**

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF JOB (Job 12:7-10):

One: But ask the beasts, and they will teach you;

All: The birds of the air, and they will tell you;

One: Or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;

All: and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

One: Who among all these does not know that the hand
of the Lord has done this?

**All: In God's hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all humankind.**

A READING FROM THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD (Ta'anit 23a, tr. Dr. J. Rabinowitz, London, UK: The Soncino Press, 1990):

One: One day Honi the circle-drawer was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked him "How long does it take for this tree to bear fruit?"

All: The man replied, "Seventy years."

One: Honi further asked him, "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?"

All: The man replied, "I found grown carob trees in the world; as my ancestors planted these for me, so I too plant these for my children."

A READING FROM ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI ("The Canticle of Brother Sun" from Assisi Codex N. 338, 13th Century):

One: All-highest, almighty, good Lord, to you be praise, glory and honor, and every blessing.

All: To you alone they are due, and no man is worthy to speak your name.

One: Be praised my Lord in all your creatures, especially Brother Sun, who makes daytime, and through whom you give us light.

All: And he is beautiful, radiant with great splendor; and he is a sign that tells, All-highest, of you.

One: Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars.

All: You formed them in the sky, bright and precious and beautiful.

One: Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth...

All: Who keeps us, and feeds us, and brings forth fruits of many kinds, & colored flowers & plants as well.

One: Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Bodily Death, whom no living man can escape.

All: Blessed are those whom she will find doing your holy will, for to them final death will do no harm.

One: Bless and praise my Lord.

All: Thank him and serve him in all humility.

**A READING FROM AL-QUR'AN (2:116-117 & 14:41-45)
(A Contemporary Translation by Ahmed Ali, Princeton Univ. Press, 1984):**

One: Indeed, every thing in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, and all are obedient to God.

All: Creator of the heavens and the earth from nothingness, He has only to say, when He wills a thing: "Be," and it is.

One: Have you not seen that all those who are in the heavens and the earth, and the bird on the wing, sing the praises of God?

All: Each one knows its obligations and its duties, and God knows whatever they do. For God's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and the returning is to God.

One: Have you not seen that God drives the clouds, then joins them together and puts them fold on fold?

All: Then you see the rain fall through them; and He sends down hail from the sky where there are mountains of it, and strikes those with it whom He will, and wards it off from whomsoever He pleases.

One: His lightning could snatch away their eyes.

All: It is God who alternates night and day.

One: There is surely a lesson in this for men of sight.

All: God created every moving thing from water: One crawls on its belly, one walks on two legs, another moves on four.

One: God creates whatsoever He will.

All: Indeed, God has power over every thing.

A READING FROM THE PROPHET MOHAMMED

(from the “*Book of Dede Korkut*” (Turkish Tales), Banarly, 1971, tr. Sargun A. Tont, in *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, page 392, London, UK: U. N. Environmental Programme, 1999):

- One: The prophet Mohammed once compared a good Muslim to a palm tree and declared that tree planting would be an acceptable form of alms.
- All: The people did not understand, so the prophet said:**
- One: Tree, tree, do not be embarrassed because I call you that. After all, the doors of Mekka and Medina are made of wood.
- All: The staff of Moses is also made of wood.**
- One: The bridges spanning over big rivers are also made from you.
- All: The ships which roam the black seas are made of wood.**

AN ISLAMIC STATEMENT ABOUT ECOLOGY (Introduction in “*Qur’an: Creation and Conservation*” by Fazlun Khalid, Birmingham, UK: Islamic Foundation for Ecology & Environmental Sciences, 1999):

- One: The Qur’an lays down the foundations for the conduct of our affairs in creation
- All: At one level, it is about conserving the body & the soul, and the marking out of our relationships with the natural order.**
- One: At another level, it is about the communities of beings that fly and crawl and lope and swim.
- All: At yet another level, it is about the cosmos, the elements, forests, mountains and rivers.**
- One: The body of teaching in the Qur’an that deals with these matters may be described as *’Ilm ul Khalq* (Knowledge of Creation) which predates the science of Ecology by fourteen centuries.

A HINDU HYMN TO THE EARTH (excerpts from “*Hymn to the Earth: The Prithvi Sukta*,” the 12th Chapter of the *Artharva Veda*, tr. by Shrinivas S. Sohoni. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Ltd., 1991):

- One: May this Earth, whose surface undulates with many gradients, and sustains an abundant variety of herbs and plants of different potencies and qualities, support all human beings, in all their diversity of endowment, in mutually supportive harmony and prosperity.
- All: May this Earth, replete with seas, rivers and water sources, excellent food grain from agriculture, prolific vegetation and abundant living creatures bestow upon us munificent nutrition.**
- One: Skillfully conserved by wise and alert persons, this Earth, which in ancient times was submerged in water, and is bound with the highest spiritual force, may this Earth, infused with divine force and truth, confer upon us brilliance, strength and sovereignty.
- All: May this Earth, bearing snowy mountains and deep forests, be kind to us and give us happiness.**
- One: May the Earth’s supportive surface be fertile & arable, abundantly endowed with forests, and may this Earth with regular change of seasons, and with a stable base for life, provide a safe existence protected from untimely interventions.
- All: May all mortal entities, bipeds & quadrupeds, and all communities of human beings, receive the spiritual stimulus of the ever-rising & inexhaustible Sun.**
- One: Boulders, rocks, stones, dust-particles, all these form the Earth’s crust; the Earth is golden within. May the Earth support us.

A READING FROM THE BUDDHA'S JATAKAS ("Metta Sutta 1: the Discourse on Lovingkindness," cited in Harvey Artonson, *Love & Sympathy in Theravada Buddhism*, p. 49. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980):

- One: May all beings be at ease, secure; may they be happy in heart.
- All: Whatever they may be, wandering or stable, all creatures long or great, medium-sized or small, all creatures seen or unseen, living far or near, born or awaiting birth, may all be happy at heart!**
- One: One should cultivate an unlimited loving mind toward all beings the way a mother protects her only child with her life.
- All: One should cultivate an unlimited loving mind without obstruction, anger or opposition, to the whole world -- above, below, across.**

A PRAYER FROM BAHÁ'U'LLAH ("A Treasury of Baha'i Prayers" sel. by Juliet Mabey, p. 60, Oxford, UK: One World, 1999):

- One: From the sweet-scented streams of Thine eternity, give me to drink, O my God.
- All: Of the fruits of the tree of Thy being, enable me to taste, O my Hope.**
- One: Beneath the shadow of Thine everlasting providence, let me abide, O my Light.
- All: Within the meadows of Thy nearness, before Thy presence, make me able to roam, O my Beloved.**
- One: From the fragrant breezes of Thy joy, let a breath pass over me, O my Goal.
- All: And into the heights of the paradise of Thy reality, let me gain admission, O my Adored One.**

REMARKS FROM HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA (from "My Tibet" by His Holiness the Dalai Lama & Galen Rowell, University of California Press, 1990; reprinted by the United Nations Environment Programme in "Earth and Faith: A Book of Reflection for Action" ed. by Libby Bassett, 2000, 212/963-8210, uneprona@un.org):

- READER 1: As a boy studying Buddhism, I was taught the importance of a caring attitude toward the environment.
- READER 2: Our practice of nonviolence applies not just to human beings but to all sentient beings, any living thing that has a mind.
- All: Where there is a mind, there are feelings such as pain, pleasure, and joy.**
- READER 1: In Buddhist practice, we get so used to this idea of nonviolence and the ending of suffering that we become accustomed to not harming or destroying anything indiscriminately.
- READER 2: Although we do not believe that trees or flowers have minds, we treat them also with respect.
- All: Thus we share a sense of universal responsibility for both mankind and nature.**
- READER 1: If we think of the planet as our house, or as our mother -- Mother Earth -- we automatically feel concern for our environment.
- READER 2: Today we understand that the future of humanity very much depends on our planet, and that the future of the planet very much depends on humanity.
- All: But this has not always been so clear to us.**
- READER 1: Until now, you see, Mother Earth has somehow tolerated sloppy house habits.
- READER 2: But now human use, population, and technology have reached that certain stage where Mother Earth no longer accepts our presence with silence. In many ways she is now telling us, "My children are behaving badly."
- All: She is warning us that there are limits to our actions.**

SACRED WORDS FROM CONFUCIANISM (The first two sentences are from Confucius, *The Analects*, XV:23, the remainder are from Meng-Tzu, *Mencius*, tr. D. C. Lau, New York: Penguin Books, 1970):

- One: Tzu Kung asked, "Is there any one word that can serve as a principle for the conduct of life?"
- All: **Confucius said, "Perhaps the word 'reciprocity': Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you."**
- One: If you do not interfere with the busy seasons in the fields then there will be more grain than the people can eat.
- All: **If you do not allow nets with too fine a mesh to be used in large ponds, then there will be more fish and turtles than they can eat.**
- One: If hatchets and axes are permitted in the forests on the hills only in the proper seasons, then there will be more timber than they can use.
- All: **When the people have grain, more fish and turtles than they can eat, and more timber than they can use, then in the support of their parents when alive and in the mourning of them when dead, they'll be able to have no regrets over anything left undone.**

AN INSCRIPTION ON CHANG TSAI'S WALL (1020-1077):

- One: Heaven is my father and earth is my mother
- All: **And even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.**
- One: Therefore, that which extends throughout the universe I regard as my body, and that which directs the universe I regard as my nature.
- All: **All people are my brothers & sisters, and all things are my companions.**

A READING FROM ST. MATTHEW (Matthew 6:25-30):

- One: Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on.
- All: **Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?**
- One: Look at the birds of the air.
- All: **They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet our heavenly Father feeds them.**
- One: Are you not of more value than they?
- All: **And which of us, by being anxious, can add one cubit to our span of life?**
- One: And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.
- All: **They neither toil nor spin.**
- One: Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- All: **If God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will God not much more clothe us?**

A READING FROM THE PSALMS (24:1, 148:3-10, 104:24):

- One: The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it...
- All: **Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens...**
- One: Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.
- All: **Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command.**
- One: Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars; wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds
- All: **Praise the Lord.**
- One: O Lord, how manifold are your works!
- All: **In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.**