

## Panting After God

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.  
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? – Ps 42:1-2

Deer hunting in Pennsylvania has been an educational experience for me. It is a another world out there in the woods. During 'gun season,' as we call it here in PA, the guns begin to fire as soon as light emerges. The deer for the rest of the day are spooked. They move from one hunter's sights to another almost non-stop. Panic sets in as they see their deer pals, or next-of-kin hit the snow in a bloody pile of anguish. I have seen deer barely able to walk from running to exhaustion. Not only are their legs tired and their lungs gasping for air, their eyes seem to bulge out, their breathing is in huge gasps as they seek to renew their strength, their tongues hang out as they pant for air and long for a cool, quiet drink of water. In this condition they are desperate for a moment of tranquility.

David evidently had seen that deer panic too, and likened himself to the deer. "That's me!" He cried, "As the deer pants for the waterbrooks (weary from dodging bullets or arrows) so my soul pants after God." (Psalm 42:1)

Another look at the deer of Palestine highlights the wilderness through which many deer must pass between the seasons to find pasture. The wilderness is a semi-desert area where little water can be found. Just like walking through a desert the deer must take a healthy drink before venturing on this long journey. Near the journey's end the deer's senses are heightened. The deer is so thirsty that long before he smells the water he hears it in underground streams (streams in the desert) gurgling its way to an opening. It is this scene that David most likely imagined for he was like the deer passing through the desert waiting for God's deliverance and provision. Thus he says, "As the deer pants for the waterbrooks so pants my soul after thee, O God." – Then again, "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of your waterspouts." (Psalm 42:7)